

# **Churches respond to**



**Volume V**

**Official responses  
to the "Baptism,  
Eucharist and  
Ministry" text**

**Edited by  
Max Thurian**

Volume V of *Churches Respond to BEM* continues the documentation of the official responses of the churches to the convergence document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry". The document adopted by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1982, has so far elicited over 180 responses from WCC member churches and councils of churches. Included in the present volume are 16 responses from churches representing a wide range of confessional and cultural backgrounds.

*Max Thurian*, Frere of the Taizé Community in France, is study adviser to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

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Faith and Order Paper 143  
World Council of Churches, Geneva

## CONTENTS

The text of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland was translated by Wendy Astor. The WCC Language Service translated the following: Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic, Evangelical Church of the Congo, Evangelical Church of the River Plate.

Cover design: Michael Dominguez

ISBN 2-8254-0886-7

© 1988 World Council of Churches, 150 route de Ferney,  
1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland

Typeset by Macmillan India Ltd., Bangalore 25  
Printed in Switzerland

Preface <i>Gunther Gassmann</i> .....	vii
Church of Greece.....	1
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (India).....	4
Old Catholic Church of Switzerland.....	8
Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands .	18
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg (FRG).....	23
Evangelical Church in Baden (FRG).....	32
Evangelical Church of the Rhineland (FRG).....	69
Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck (FRG).....	94
Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic.....	119
Reformed Church in Hungary.....	161
Evangelical Church of the Congo.....	165

Moravian Church in Jamaica.....	169
Church of Christ in Thailand.....	173

Evangelical Church of the River Plate (Argentina).....	175
Melanesian Council of Churches.....	179
National Council of Churches in the Philippines.....	186

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## PREFACE

The documentation of official responses to the convergence statement on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM) is growing into a mini-library of its own. This is one visible expression of the remarkable BEM process which has aroused so much interest in the churches since BEM was adopted by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches at Lima, Peru, in 1982. And this process is still going on in many parts of the world. It is obvious that BEM is having an impact on ecumenical thinking and relationships in and among churches. It has become a standard text of reference on ecumenical reflection and is consulted in efforts towards renewal of worship and of congregational life. In addition, the (so far) more than 180 official responses provide us with a unique opportunity to learn how far the churches have come on their common ecumenical pilgrimage, and what their questions, problems, suggestions and hopes are.

We plan to conclude our series "Churches Respond to BEM" with the next volume, i.e., Volume VI. The main task of Faith and Order now is to prepare an evaluation of the responses and of the whole BEM process. This work will also include clarifications and commentaries on a number of critical questions which were raised in view of the content and orientation of BEM. The report on the evaluation will be presented to the 1989 meeting of the Faith and Order Plenary Commission and then to the churches.

This volume has again been edited by my colleague, Frere Max Thurian, and has been prepared for publication by our colleagues in WCC Publications. I am grateful for their untiring collaboration.

Geneva, July 1987

Günther Gassmann, Director  
WCC Faith and Order Secretariat

i We publish these responses in the form in which they were received.

# CHURCH OF GREECE

Athens, 19 May 1986

Prof. Dr. Chrysostom-Gerassime Zaphiris  
Metropolitan of Peristerion

Rev. Dr. Giinther Gassmann Director,  
Faith and Order Secretariat World  
Council of Churches Geneva

Dear Dr Gassmann,

On a mandate from the Synodical Committee on Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Relations of the Church of Greece, a special committee composed of theologians undertook the study of the entire issue concerning the texts on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" prepared by the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. This special committee of theologians, having met many times, studied the texts in question both from the viewpoint of Orthodox tradition and theology — especially from that of ecclesiology — and from the viewpoint of the special process of their "reception" by each one of the WCC's member churches.

The special committee, after special written reports and commentaries by professors Ioannis Kalogyrou, Vlasios Pheidas and Gerasimos Konidaris on each one of the texts respectively, proceeded to evaluate theologically, from an Orthodox viewpoint, the three texts and in the end to re-evaluate the methodology employed by the WCC in the matter, and arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The texts on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" are within the framework of Faith and Order's mission to seek out the theological presupposi-

»9,025,000 members, 78 dioceses, 8,335 priests, 84 bishops.

tions which facilitate the broader dialogue between the member churches of the WCC and the advancement of the idea of the unity of the Christian world in the correct faith and in love. In this sense, the texts in question are, in any case, useful examples of the multilateral dialogue being carried on between the representatives of the various member churches within the framework of the WCC, as for example the proposal concerning the introduction of the institution of the episkope, and undoubtedly will constitute a serious motivation for theological endeavour.

2. The Orthodox Church of Greece, as one of the founding members of the WCC, actively participates through its theological representatives in the multilateral dialogue being carried on within the World Council — despite the serious reservations sometimes expressed by its *pleroma* concerning the Council's aims, deviations and expedencies. In this sense, discussions have taken place and continue to take place on the basis of decisions taken at Sofia (the *Sofia desiderata*) which concerned necessary alterations of the WCC's Constitution in accordance also with a related decision taken by the first pre-conciliar pan-Orthodox consultation in 1976.

3. The procedure followed by the WCC in sending the texts in question to the member churches for the promotion of the idea of their "reception" — in any sense that the term "reception" may be understood — is a novel initiative of the WCC and is outside the framework specified by the Constitution's articles for the carrying on of the multilateral dialogue within this inter-Christian organization. The WCC is simply the framework within which its member churches independently carry on this dialogue.

4. The innovation introduced by a related decision of the WCC's Central Committee in the methodology of the dialogue constitutes, in the final analysis, an alteration of the constitutional base and an over-stepping of the constitutional principles concerning the relations of the member churches in the WCC because it entails a development of relations with the administrative offices of the WCC. Thus, the WCC by such an initiative aims at abandoning its role as a fixed framework and to turn itself into the main and dynamic dialogue partner of its member churches, which shall be obliged to carry on dialogue not only with one another within the framework of the WCC, but with the WCC itself.

5. The special committee of theologians underlining the consequences of any response — regardless of its content — to the process proposed by the WCC considers the novel methodology being introduced:

3. as a process ecclesialogically and theologically unnecessary, since no review or correction whatsoever of what is considered to be the final form of the three Lima texts is envisaged and the completion of the theological work of its drafting has been announced;
4. as not foreseen by the stipulations of the WCC's Constitution and as not covered by procedures established by precedent, at least as regards the manner of framing its proposals to the member churches;

as an alteration of the constitutional base and the institutional framework of the relations of the member churches within the framework of the WCC. In conformity with the above, the special committee of theologians,

despite the fact that it encourages all types of theological evaluation of the Lima texts, considers not only of no value but even harmful any type of official or non-official ecclesiastical reply.

Yours sincerely,

Chrysostomos  
Metropolitan of Peristerion  
President of the special committee of theologians



## MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH (INDIA)

(The holy episcopal synod considered the study document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" with great interest, and had it further examined by a commission specially delegated for this. It is not yet in a position to give a final assessment of the document which would require volumes. The following interim comments are sent to the World Council of Churches for consideration.)

5. The synod feels that this is an extremely important milestone in the ecumenical movement. Theologians representing a hundred different traditions have found a common ground on which to pursue the dialogue on the issues dividing Christians. The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is to be highly commended on this major achievement.
6. The part of the document which deals with baptism is, understandably, the least controversial, and embodies a very large area of convergence of understanding and conviction. It is perhaps true that any given single tradition may, however, not want to start with this document as the basis of its own teaching on baptism, which lacks an adequate theology of baptism, especially for the following two reasons.

In interpreting the meaning of baptism, incorporation into the body of Christ (§6) is now given a place but not adequately expounded in the document. It is at this point that there are divergences of position among us, and it will be good to devote further attention to this point.

A similar point of divergence is the relation between baptism and chrismation. The differences in practice and therefore in understanding can be a hurdle in the dialogue between East and West in the church. For the Orthodox this point of divergence creates many difficulties in accepting the baptism of other churches. Our perspective at this point is briefly alluded to at the end of §20 of the document.

Apart from these two important points, the synod finds much of the rest of the document quite useful as a starting point for an ecumenical dialogue with other communions.

3. On the eucharist, the synod finds a large area of agreement, especially where it affirms the anamnetic<sup>1</sup> or participatory and anticipatory or eschatological character of the eucharist, and expounds its epikletic<sup>2</sup> character—(the eucharist as the work of Christ the High Priest through the Holy Spirit, a foretaste of the kingdom. The synod is also in agreement about the need for renewal of eucharistic life and teaching in every church and about the need for frequent communion.

What the document does not discuss adequately has to do with the questions: (a) what is the minimum requirement about agreement in faith in order that two churches may be in communion with each other, and (b) is there any positive witness in refusing with pain in the heart to be in communion with another church? We hope the Faith and Order Commission will devote some attention to these questions.

Over all, the synod feels that this middle part of the document is perhaps the richest.

4. Understandably the document is least satisfactory and most controversial on the question of the Christian ministry. The synod feels that the problem in the discussion of the ministry could be focused around three points, where the document needs improvement:

7. the nature of the church as participating in the ministry of Christ;
8. the meaning of ordination as a sacramental mystery;
9. the relation of the ordained ministry to the other sacramental mysteries of the church.

The church is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ, with the apostles and prophets, martyrs and saints built into the structure. The church as the body of Christ who is its head includes Christ himself. If Christ is regarded as somehow standing apart from the church, commissioning it, the meaning of the ministry would be misunderstood. The mystery of the church in which God in Christ incorporates us sinners into the very person of Christ cannot be grasped merely as a commission or as a function. The church is also a presence, the very presence of God in Christ. The ministry becomes recognizable only where the church is experienced as a divine-human presence and comprising of Christ and previous generations of Christians.

The church as a whole is a divine presence, and the fullness of this presence requires the presence of the ordained ministry within it. The act of ordination, by *epiklesis* of the Holy Spirit, is itself a sacramental mystery, and the ordained person remains a sacramental mystery, manifesting the

i 1,600,000 members, 15 dioceses, 1,130 churches, 15 bishops, 950 priests, 62 deacons.

*Anamnesis* = recalling, making present. <sup>1</sup> *Epiklesis* = invocation (of the Holy Spirit).

divine presence in a special way. Paragraphs 4Iff. of the document recognize the epikletic and sacramental character of the act of ordination to a certain extent. The grasping of what is implied in these paragraphs can go a long way towards preparing the ground for mutual recognition of ministries and for the churches' communion with each other, which has a great deal to do with that recognition.

The recognition should be facilitated if the sacramental character of the ordained person and of the community of ordained ministers can be more widely recognized. So long as the ordained ministry is regarded by some churches as mere office (*Ami*) or function and not as a sacramental mystery, mutual recognition of the ministries would be difficult.

The document could be improved by a discussion of the relation of ordination to baptism-chrismation, and to the eucharist, as well as to other sacramental mysteries like the absolution of sins, and the anointing of the sick. It could also be improved by interpreting the ministry of the church as Christ's ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit to the whole world, and by expounding the ordained ministry more integrally within the ministry of all who are baptized and chrismated.

5. The synod has given some thought especially to the question of women's ministry in the church. There is no doubt that women are full members of the church and not in any sense inferior to men. We do revere the Virgin Mary, the Holy Theotokos, above the apostles; many women are among the recognized saints and martyrs of the church; churches are consecrated in their names and they are honoured intercessors in the church.

It is recognized also that, in our altered social conditions, women could take a more active part in the ministry of the church than in the recent past especially in the area of intercessory prayer, teaching and diakonia. This is indeed beginning to happen in our churches and the synod encourages this trend. On the matter of ordaining women to the episcopate or the presbyterate, we take seriously the apostolic tradition which does not permit women to preside at the sacramental mysteries of the church. We take seriously the fact that Christ himself, who was never afraid of violating wrong social customs, did not choose women to be apostles, though he had many highly competent women disciples. The apostles did not ordain even the ablest of women (Phoebe, Euodia, Syntyche and others) to the presidency of the churches which they established. And the Christian church as a whole did not ordain women to the priesthood for nineteen centuries.

These are weighty considerations. They are just as weighty as the facts: that men and women are equal in the sight of God and in the body of Christ; that women in the Old Testament were civil rulers (Esther), judges (Deborah), prophets (Mariam, Hannah), even war leaders (Judith and Jael); that women in the New Testament played crucial and decisive roles in the ministry of Christ (Mary, Anna, Elizabeth, Mary Magdalene, Joanna and others, Luke 8:1-3), and in the early church (1 Cor. 9:6, Luke 24:10ff; Prisca,

Phoebe, Mary, Stachys, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, etc. Rom. 16; Euodia, Syntyche, Phil. 4:2-3). The synod is convinced, however, that there is deep wisdom in the tradition of the church, which cannot always be penetrated or perceived by the rational mind, and which should not be too lightly broken on the basis of a rational argument alone.

The ordination of women to the episcopate and presbyterate is likely to create a fresh obstacle to the mutual recognition of ministries; but we have confidence in the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit that the church will be led in the ways of God.

20 February 1985

Kottayam

# OLD CATHOLIC CHURCH OF SWITZERLAND

This response was drawn up by Prof. Dr Herwig Aldenhoven and Dr Urs von Arx, commissioned by the general assembly of the clergy of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland based on its discussions in November 1983 and March 1985 as well as taking into account the work done at the international consultation of Old Catholic theologians in September 1983. It was submitted to the international bishops' conference of the Old Catholic Church for their information in August 1985, and in November 1985 approved by the general assembly of the clergy and also adopted by the bishop and the synod council of the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland as an official response of this church.

## 1. General

We approve the texts as a whole and declare our conviction that they do not contain anything that would contradict the faith of the church through the ages. We thereby take into account that they are convergence texts in which the faith of individual denominations does not have to be stated as adequately as would be the case with consensus texts. We are happy about the high level of ecumenical agreement which is expressed in the three documents.

We expressly welcome the fact that the question is about the "faith of the church through the ages", as this is a challenge, especially to all those churches which have come into being during the second millennium, to reconsider anew their understanding of the historical continuity of the faith, for instance with the critical question in mind: does this continuity for each denomination only begin at the time of its emergence which itself stands in ahistorical immediacy to the New Testament?

When we combine, in the following, our general agreement with the three texts with criticism of individual aspects, it does not mean that we thereby

• 20,000 members, 44 parishes, 41 priests, 1 bishop.

*Old Catholic Church of Switzerland 9*

set a condition for the acceptance of the texts. Rather we want to clarify what is very important for our church and how it understands certain statements of the texts. We think that with this we are also expressing some concerns of other church traditions, this resulting from our theology having been formed in ecumenical discussions for a long time in spite of all orientation towards the ancient church. Our agreement, by the way, refers to the original English text.

We consider it very important for the further work of the Commission on Faith and Order to define more clearly their ecclesiological basis regarding these three texts, in order that certain statements — for example about the efficacy of baptism and eucharist as well as about the meaning of the ministry — do not give reason for "sacramentalistic" or other misunderstandings. We are making proposals on individual points for this further work.

The Old Catholic Church should, in our opinion, take up or continue as far as possible discussions with those churches which also acknowledge these texts as an expression of the apostolic faith, with a view to the realization of unity. The acknowledgment of the "Lima" texts can thereby be a first step in leading us on towards a consensus text.

## 2. Baptism

a) Points which, in our opinion, need to be worked on further or to which we have proposals for improvement are as follows:

*To 1:* The title to I. should be extended: "The Institution and the Necessity of Baptism". At the end of §1 the following sentence ought to be added: "as we are incorporated in Christ by baptism, we cannot reject it. In this sense baptism is necessary."

*To 6:* The following point of view is to be added (perhaps after the second sentence): the admission into the whole church is always at the same time the admission into a definite community in a particular location.

*To 12:* The following point is to be added (before the last sentence): The church takes over a lasting responsibility for those who — whatever age they may be — are baptized.

At this point we also mention a terminological concern: could there not be expressions found for "baptism of believers" and "baptism of infants" which would take into account that the "practice of infant baptism emphasizes the corporate faith and the faith which the child shares with its parents", as is written in the commentary to §12? The contrasting expressions "believers' baptism" and "infant baptism" seem to exclude this corporate faith.

*To 14 (commentary):* In (a) the following should be added: "in the ancient church initiation originally took place through baptism (with the laying on of hands and/or anointing) and the first participation in the Lord's

supper immediately connected to it which corresponds to the theological inter-relationship of baptism, confirmation and eucharist".

The last sentence in (c) is not well linked up with the preceding one, as the renewal of baptismal vows is something totally different than the renewed confirmation of baptism through participation of the baptized at the eucharist. The thought of a renewal of baptismal vows seems to us problematic anyway. These vows are made once and for all and can strictly speaking not be renewed. It is necessary to meditate on them again and again; therefore we propose the expression "remembrance of baptism" (*Taufgedächtnis*).

*To 15:* We propose the following addition to the last sentence: "... through documents worked out together. The teaching of baptism as well as the practice of baptism must be taken into consideration."

*To 18:* The following should be added in the first sentence: "... the symbolic dimension of water, thus also the washing, and immersion should be taken seriously".

In further work, baptism and confirmation ought not to be dealt with separately.

b) The text about baptism gives us a help inasmuch as the last sentence of §16 and the commentary (b) to §21 (indiscriminate administration of baptism) as well as §23 (connection of baptism and worship of the church) draw our attention anew to a difficulty in our baptism practice known for some time, and make us all the more determined not to give up the search for a solution.

### 3. Eucharist

a) Points which according to us still need to be worked on or for which we have proposals for improvement are as follows:

*To 1:* The last sentence corresponds absolutely to our point of view but is not sufficiently substantiated here. An explanation should show the relation between the preaching of the word and the eucharist (see below under 12). On the one hand it should be mentioned that the eucharist is to be understood as coming from the word and on the other hand that in the eucharist it is experienced most intensively that the word became flesh in Christ, thus has entered into the whole reality of human life and that it effects visible corporeal communion.

*To 2:* Here and also later God as well as the church is mentioned as the active subject of the eucharist. Both are important. This is the reason why it should be shown in what relation to each other God and the church as the active subject stand respectively. In doing so it should be pointed out more clearly than in this text that the church is a community of faith and acts as such. This particularly would have to be explained in the ecclesiological outline (see above under general), so that a brief comment here would be sufficient.

*To 5:* The biblical idea of memorial which is so important for the right understanding of the eucharist is presupposed here but what it is is not explained. As no general clarity prevails, at least the necessary explanation ought to be given in the commentary. In doing so the following points need especially to be considered: particularly in the liturgical celebrations the memorial is at the same time an act of God and of man. By commanding a commemoration, God gives us a pledge of his promise. By the celebration of this commemoration, those who celebrate come with this pledge before God in the trust therein that he remembers his past act of salvation and his promise and fulfills them in the present time (see also below under 27).

*To 8 (commentary):* A Catholic theology orientated towards the church fathers — hence also the Old Catholic — does not use the expression "expiatory sacrifice" for the eucharist. In this sense the term "in Catholic theology" is to be qualified.

*To 12:* That the preached word and the eucharistic meal reinforce one another should be more closely explained (see above under 1). The phrasing that the celebration of the eucharist includes the proclamation of the word can be misunderstood because it can give the impression that the proclamation of the word is only a sort of part of the, sacrament of eucharist. It would be better to say that the eucharistic meal is always connected with the proclamation of the word. The phrasing in §3 also seems good to us, in which the eucharist "always includes both word and sacrament". It is a little confusing that the word "eucharist" is used in different ways in the text: at one point it designates the God given gift of salvation, then the celebration of the church including the ministry of the word and the Lord's supper and finally the Lord's supper alone. Of course the statements are not in fact wrong but we fear that this usage of language makes the understanding more difficult particularly for those churches which are not used to this terminology.

*To 13 and 15 (commentary):* The difference noticed here with regard to the real presence needs further clarification. The theological concerns that lie behind the different views must be put in relation to one another. For us it is equally important to avoid a non-spiritual materialistic misunderstanding of the real presence as well as a spiritualistic misunderstanding where the corporeal is depreciated. It seems to us that in this direction a more extensive convergence than is the case in the present text of §§13 and 15 should and could be attained.

*To 19:* The reality of the eucharistic communion in a given place and its relation to the other local eucharistic communities should be dealt with more explicitly than is here the case in the second sentence (see below under 20 and 21 about ministry).

In the second sentence of the commentary there is mention of different denominational churches as well as the different local churches. Denomina-

tional churches which presuppose the division of the church and local churches which do not presuppose this division are not the same.

To 20: A clearer difference must be made between the injustices committed by Christians and those committed by non-Christians. The former stand in contradiction to the eucharistic communion, the latter by nature not.

In the second part of §20, it has not been considered that the "participants in the eucharist", in very different degrees and possibly even not at all, have the possibility to "participate actively in the ongoing restoration of the world's situation and human conditions". Thus the impression is given, even with actually stating correctly, that one is pressed here in a biblically untenable way to an indiscriminate political activism.

To 27: The list of the elements of the eucharistic liturgy seems to us important in order to allow us to recognize where the eucharistic celebration has undergone shrinking and impoverishment.

"Act of repentance" and "declaration of pardon", though, are historically as well as theologically only optional as particular elements in the eucharistic liturgy.

The explanation of the *anamnesis* is not fully satisfying. It should rather be rewritten as "an address to God in which it is expressed that we, in fulfilment of Christ's commission, carry out the act with bread and wine for the commemoration of the great acts of redemption". It is important that the stress does not lie on the idea that we commemorate, but that we do what he has commanded us to do to his commemoration. With regard to the different positions of the *epiklesis* within the eucharistic prayer, it should be mentioned that each of them also implies a specific theological message and as such cannot be simply arbitrary.

The expression "reference to the communion of saints" should be expanded as follows: "reference to the concrete communion that celebrates eucharist and to the communion of saints as a whole".

To 29: The presidency of an ordained minister at the eucharistic celebration, as is mentioned in §29, points to the presidency of Christ. It would also be important to mention at the same time that the call for the presidency of an ordained person also points out the fact that the eucharist is basically the assembly of God's people at a particular place though never a private assembly.

b) With regard to our own practice, we feel challenged by §32. For us, as a church which reserves the consecrated elements after the celebration, it is particularly desirable to take to heart "that, on the one hand, it be remembered, especially in sermons and instruction, that the primary intention of reserving the elements is their distribution among the sick and to those who are absent". We are aware that this teaching, which we basically adopt, must remain implausible for our own believers as well as for our discussion

partners in the ecumenical movement as long as the greater part of the reserved consecrated elements are not used for the above-mentioned reason but for distribution at a later eucharistic celebration.

#### 4. Ministry

a) The following are points for which we particularly wish to emphasize our agreement:

- that the text begins with the calling of the whole people of God (§§1-6);
- the statement that the church, in order to fulfill its mission, needs the ministry and that this ordained ministry is constitutive for the life and witness of the church (§§8 and 14);
- the authority of Christ and that of the ordained minister are not played against one another but, as is correctly stated, Christ needs the ministry as a reference point (§§15 and 16);
- the justification and rectification of the usage of the term "priest" for the ordained ministry (§17);
- the way the authority of the ministry is situated in regard to the Trinity and the community (§15);
- the description of the ministry not only in its essence but also as regards its functioning (e.g. §12);
- the emphasis on the importance of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon for the "unity which we seek" (§§19-33, especially 22);
- the close relationship between community and ministry (§26) which corresponds to the episcopal and synodical constitution of our church;
- the endorsement of the autonomous diaconate (§31 commentary);
- the way the ministry is situated in the framework of charisms and the openness for further charisms (§§32 and 33);
- the understanding with regard to the content of the succession as tradition in the church (§34);
- that the continuity of the whole church in the apostolic faith is regarded as important and that its theological foundation rests on the constancy of the mission of Christ (§35);
- the importance of the orderly transmission of the ministry (§35);
- the description of the episcopal succession as "a sign of continuity and unity of the church" (§38) and as "serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion" (§36);
- the recognition of a continuity in the apostolic faith, in the worship and in the mission of those churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate (§37);
- the recommendation to recognize the apostolic content of the ordained ministry in these churches coupled with the plea to these churches to accept the sign of episcopal succession (§§38 and 53);

- the statement that the succession of the office of bishop represents no automatic guarantee for unity and continuity of the church (§38);
- the act of ordination by laying on of hands and prayer (§§39 and 52);
- the hope of the efficacy of the ordination prayer in the sense of an *epiklesis* (§§42 and 43);
- the unrepeatability of ordination (§48).

b) In the ecclesiological outline (§§1-5) essential things are said about the mission of the church, but the existence of the church as a community, its presuppositions and consequences are not dealt with enough. This has an effect on the various assertions about the ministry in different places.

The following are points which in our opinion ought to be worked on further or to which we have proposals for improvement:

*To 5:* Instead of the phrasing "gifts of guiding and following" we propose for clarification: "the gifts of guiding and of following the right guidance and of refusing the wrong guidance".

*To 7-18:* The "horizontal" (§8) and the "vertical" (§§10, 11, 15) explanation of the ministry stand side by side unconnected, as well as do the mission character of the ministry and the synodal character of the church. In the church, ministry and community are always there together: the community is the foundation and goal of the ministry and the ministry is at the same time an organ of Christ and an organ of the community. That is why the pneumatological and Christological statements of §§1-6 should be taken more into account in §§7-18.

*To 14:* The Old Catholic churches see the presidency of not ordained persons in a eucharistic celebration as a grave shortcoming. This question plays an important role in the establishment of the ecclesiastical community.

*To 17 (commentary):* It should be specified in the second paragraph that the expression "priest" was used first only for the bishop and then later on also for the presbyter. As it has never been used for the deacons, speaking in general of the ordained ministry is inexact without the proposed specification.

*To 20 and 21:* The threefold ministry in §20 (older stage with the bishop as president of a local eucharistic community) and in §21 (later stage with the bishop as exercising the episkope over several local eucharistic communities) is described as something basically different. In contrast to this, on the one hand, one must realize that the bishop, also in the later stage, leads the local eucharistic community even if most of the time a presbyter presides over the eucharistic community at a specific place. The presbyter does this in connection with the bishop and on his behalf; if the bishop visits this local community then he himself, of course, heads the eucharistic celebration. On the other hand, the episkope of the bishop over his church existed in the early as well as in the later stage; that is why the term episkope should be introduced first not in §21 but already in §20. The extent of the episkope has

(changed: in the earlier stage it reached basically over one place, in the later stage several places (as a rule around a city centre consisting of a certain size which itself had several eucharistic communities—expressed in a modern way: church parishes). In the earlier stage the theological as well as a more geographical aspect of the term "place" was one and the same; in the later stage they diverged each in different degrees. This development was regarded as necessary and legitimate in the interest of a better presentation and realization of unity. Also a parish of today is often too small a district to fulfill itself all functions of a local church.

Theologically speaking, the church headed by the bishop in the later stage is still a local church but geographically speaking, a regional church with different places. The eucharistic communities headed in the later stage by presbyters are, according to what the church at that time stood for, not the successors of the local eucharistic communities in the earlier stage headed by a bishop as is suggested in §21. The unity and continuity of the old local church (basically an urban diocese) with the later local church (a diocese with several "places"), which exists from a theological point of view is not preserved terminologically if the expression "local community" or "local eucharistic community" is related only to the community headed by presbyters ("parishes") as is the case throughout the text on ministry. In this text at times one proceeds in a too unreflected manner from modern phenomena where the regional church headed by a bishop looks like a merger of "proper" eucharistic communities headed by presbyters. But in our view one should speak from historical and theological reasons rather of a segmentation of the one eucharistic community — symbolized by the one bishop — into different places — symbolized through the many presbyters.

According to the point of view just explained one should speak of the "collegiality" of the presbyter also in §21. Otherwise the impression arises that this only existed in the earlier stage (§20). It existed though, in fact, also in the later stage (§21) in a form adjusted to the new circumstances even though it faded in importance in the course of time.

In this context it would be desirable in further work that a clarification and differentiation of the term "local church" is made which today — partly also in the Lima text — is used for such different things as individual parishes, national churches, denominations and (in the ecumenical discussion rather seldom) dioceses. In regard to the theological criteria of a local church a consideration of the following points seems to us important and for restructuring desirable:

A local church should, even if the eucharist is celebrated at numerous places, be a size that can be overlooked so that in it regular contacts are possible if not amongst all believers then at least amongst the leaders and representatives of the individual eucharistic communities as well as between them and the representative and symbol of unity (bishop). The bishop should personally head the celebrations of the eucharist in individual

communities ("parishes") in not too great time intervals. In addition the local church should as well be able to fulfill, to some extent autonomously, the most important tasks i.e. diaconia, mission, theological formation and so on. Based on these explanations one should further show that the local church is in the first place a community of persons and not an administrative unit. In the same way one ought to emphasize that the function of the bishop is to be a personal symbol and an organ of the unity of the community with its manifold gifts and tasks. Hence, the decision of the old church for the bishop's ministry as being distinct from the presbyterate — a decision binding for the Old Catholics — would become understandable inasmuch as it brings to bear the essential dimensions of what the church is.

*To 28-31:* Mentioned in different places in the texts is the fact that the references to unity and the collegiality are essential aspects of the ordained ministry. But this is nowhere mentioned explicitly in regard to the cooperation between the bishop and the assembly of presbyters wherein the unity and the collegiality of the ordained ministry in the local church would find its expression. This shortcoming is also not resolved in §§28-31 inasmuch as in §29 there is not enough differentiation between those tasks that a bishop has to face in regard to his local church together with the assembly of the presbyters and with the deacons, and those other tasks that are demanded of a bishop in communion with the other bishops in regard to the over-regional and universal unity and continuity of the local churches. With this we come to talk anew of a basic problem of the Lima texts (see above under general). Nowhere is it made clear whether the explanations about the eucharist and about the ordained ministry in the church are based on an ecclesiology of local churches or of a universal church. Even though that might have been intended it leads to obscurities in the understanding of the texts. We think that a theology of local churches would correspond better to the structure and the intention of the convergence declarations. Under this premise §29 would be clearer when first the bishop is spoken of in the singular and when bishops in the plural are mentioned only where those tasks are dealt with which go beyond the local church. Incidentally "oversight, continuity and unity in the Church" in our opinion are not on the same level and therefore should not simply be put side by side as is the case in the first sentence of §29. In order to specify the particular characteristic of the episcopate we would put "unity" before "continuity".

As a necessary contrast to the naming of one bishop in the local church (§29), the collegial character of the presbyteral ministry within the relevant local church should be mentioned in §30.

To the last sentence of §30 we would like to add the following: "Presbyters have together with the bishop particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry, so that they can take over their own responsibility as a community." This seems to us to be important in order to exclude a clerical misunderstanding of the ordained ministry.

*To 34-36:* In order that the continuity in the apostolic faith is preserved in the right manner and the ministry as a sign and safeguard of this continuity can work, an extensive communication is necessary between bishop and community, communities amongst themselves, presbyters and communities, presbyters and bishops, bishops amongst each other, etc. This aspect should be mentioned explicitly.

*To 36:* For the sake of historical truth the following should be added to the end of §36: "This significance of the episcopate has been obscured in the course of time often through the fusion with worldly power structures."

*To 40 (commentary):* The Old Testament background to the ordination by laying on of hands should be pointed out.

c) We would like to adopt the following suggestions for the life and witness of our church:

The function of the bishop as president of the eucharist should be expressed more clearly where it has, in our church, partly developed into an obscure practice.

The question of the obstacles to ordination must be thought through anew in the light of §50 especially in view of the handicapped.

A communication in the sense of what is stated above under §§34—36 which includes the bishop's dialogue with the presbyters and the communities as well as with the theological teaching staff should be created and intensified. Therefore it should be guaranteed that the ordained ministry is not an end in itself but a service to the people of God.



## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

### Introduction and response to the questions addressed to the churches

We are pleased at the many points of agreement particularly on those things which have in the past given rise to important disagreements, as well as at the many prospects opening up in a new way for the *oikoumene*, and revealing a greater community among the churches.

At many points this paper also stimulates renewed consideration of certain aspects of the subjects dealt with.

We do not intend to go into all these aspects exhaustively, but simply to make a more thorough analysis of the points that seem particularly important to us in the section on the eucharist. In the process the ministry also has to be mentioned, and thus in the subsequent section we can deal with the subject of the ministry briefly.

In view of the objections we raise, we want to begin by stressing the following. We do not regard points of theological discussion and differences of opinion as a breach of unity in Christ, as this unity does not depend on our beliefs but on *him* who alone is the guarantee of our unity. This is emphasized by the authority — repeatedly stressed below — of the self-impacting word of God, which is always the subject in relation to other "instruments" which it uses for the *ministerium verbi*. So our critique which is set out here as our response and reaction to *the first question* put to the churches will in no way detract from, but rather contribute to, the growing consensus in the *oikoumene*; a consensus at which we rejoice and from which we also draw conclusions, insofar as we have not already drawn them; conclusions such as are described in the *second question*.

We refer in this context to the consensus on the Lord's supper with the Dutch Reformed Church, which was arrived at years ago (1956), and also to the agreement on baptism with the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, through the acceptance of the Leuenberg Agreement, fellowship with

the Reformed (Gereformeerde) churches and the Remonstrants (Remonstrantse Broederschap) has also found a common theological basis.

With regard to the *third question* which relates to the internal consideration of this statement, we can state that we have prepared helps on this, or at least on the statements on baptism and eucharist, for the use of congregations.

We would, however, also make the point that a number of subjects, which in our view urgently require to be thought out theologically, have not been dealt with in the statements or have been only partially treated. We are referring to questions of hermeneutics, the missionary and diaconal character of the church and specifically ecclesiological questions which have been raised in a new way within the church as a result of various developments. Below we shall try to deal in greater detail with the three statements themselves.

### Baptism

We can endorse the first proposition of the response to this statement drawn up by the Assembly of the LWF in Budapest in 1985; it runs as follows: "The section in BEM on baptism is to be commended for its emphasis on: the relationship of baptism to the communion of saints; the ethical consequences of baptism; and the eschatological dimension of baptism."

We also regard it as a gain that the statement so clearly makes Jesus' baptism by John its starting point. It is on the basis of this baptism that we are baptized.

Baptism is seen by us as a gift of the word, a gift that does not wait for faith, but rather calls forth faith as a response. The tradition of infant baptism is thus justified, and adult baptism must also be seen within this framework of ideas.

### Eucharist

§1, 1: We approve of this section in general, but we do, however, have objections to the way in which the Jewish roots of the eucharist are treated only in passing and especially to the term "prefigured". This expression suggests a linear chronological mode of thought which implies that the earlier is superseded by the later; whereas the point is the simultaneity of the ages under the single word of God. This means that we have been brought into the history of Abraham, rather than the other way round. Likewise it cannot be said that the paschal lamb prefigures Christ, but rather that Christ relates himself to the paschal lamb. That is why it is no accident that in 1 Corinthians 10:2 nothing is said about prefiguration, but the sense is that baptism and eucharist were already there.

In his presence, the word incarnate is contemporary, as the word of God, both with us and with those who were spoken to *before him*.

II, 2, 3: We can already detect here, in our view, the tendency — typical of this whole section in the statements — to give the eucharist the widest possible significance. There is thus a danger we may lose sight of the special meaning of this event. The eucharist, the Lord's supper, is one means by which the word can reach humanity, but not the only possible one.

4: Under point 4 also, terms are used of the eucharist which really apply to the whole life of the community of faith. The word "sacrifice" here requires special attention. If no more is meant than what is provided by the Lord in John 6:9, then it is acceptable. But when we look at what follows, it has to be said here that we must tread very warily with the idea of sacrifice in relation to the eucharist. We have very little to contribute to this meal: not much more than what the earth produces and besides that only our thanksgiving. How is this to be reconciled with what is said in §20: "The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world." There "offering" is no longer the prelude to reception of the gift but a comprehensive expression for the eucharist as a whole. At this point we must draw distinctions more carefully; in the commentary or even in the text itself there should have been a clearer mention of the controversies. The question is: where should the emphasis really lie: on "thanksgiving sacrifice", or "entirely the gift of God" (26)?

5: That the term *anamnesis* is given such significance here is a great advance from the ecumenical point of view; however, the full biblical meaning of this word should have been drawn out more clearly, even though it is mentioned in the last sentence of the paragraph. The stress on *efficacitas* in reference to God's work in proclamation and celebration (see also §12 and also in part §7) modifies on the one hand the meaning of *epiklesis* as a constitutive element in the eucharist and — more importantly — the role of the minister in the so-called "representation", and also on the other hand representation itself, which is dealt with in §8.

8: In this context we do not consider the expression "representation" an adequate one. The way in which it has been elaborated in this statement confirms this opinion. We do not represent Christ's sacrifice; we are called to share in it. Nor do we represent Christ in his supper, since he alone is the present, living Lord whose word is added to the element so that it becomes a sacrament (Augustine). Just as bread and wine are necessary, so also someone is needed to give voice to the word as vehicle and instrument. In this sense the minister of the word stands totally on the receiving side, not as a representative on the giving side. We have to do with Christ's supper and not a representation of it.

Nor can we approve of what is said in the last sentence of this section about the intercessions: the intercessions do not belong within, but rather before the thanksgiving; this is their original place in the administration of the sacrament. In the eucharist itself receiving occupies the central place, not

the renewed offering of our prayers, which are on a par with the offerings we bring to the table as ministers in preparation for the eucharist itself.

In this whole section there is a danger that the church is being put in Christ's place and that in turn within the church the accent is being put on the distinctive ministry, "the ordained ministry".

#### *Epiklesis*

14: Our main objection is to §14. In it the Holy Spirit's office is elevated to that of a mediating agent; as being someone necessary for the *realis presentia* ('Christi' and the fulfilment of the "promise in the words of institution").

In the Lima liturgy this last point is once again stated explicitly just before the words of institution are pronounced. In the outline of the liturgy also the Holy Spirit is a *conditio sine qua non*.

In our view, however, the sacrament is governed neither by the ministry nor the Spirit, but solely by the word. It is none other than *verbum visibile*. There is no room for anything to intervene between word and elements. The word is an active word.

In the commentary on §14 it is rightly pointed out that there can be no talk of mechanical or magical action. Luther and Lutheran tradition have been reproached for carrying on the Western, Catholic tradition with all the attention it focuses on the words of institution and everything that implies. We think that this reproach is unfounded. The *realis presentia* is a fact, not in virtue of our words but in virtue of the promise! "So here too, were I just to say over the bread 'This is the body of Christ', of course nothing would happen. But when we pronounce what he commanded and said at the supper, 'This is my body', it is his body, not because we speak the words or because of any operative word of ours, but because he has commanded us so to speak and to act and has bound up his command and action with our words."<sup>1</sup>

In the Lutheran tradition the prayer for the Holy Spirit is focused on communion, on receiving "with true faith and thanksgiving". Paragraph 17 is therefore acceptable to us: §§15 and 16, however, in their present form are not. We think that this belief is very well expressed, in the Swedish liturgy, as follows: "Send thy Spirit into our hearts that he may kindle in us a lively faith and prepare us rightly to celebrate the memorial of our Saviour and to receive *him* when *he* comes to us in his holy supper."

#### Ministry

So much has already been implicitly said on these points that here we can be brief.

By baptism we are brought into the community and "just as we are hatched from the font" we share in the priesthood as members of the

<sup>1</sup> Luther, WA 26, 285.

community. A person is called to the *public* ministry of word and sacrament (the terminology of our church order) by the community of Christ and in the name of him who gave some to be apostles and prophets, others evangelists, others pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11). The distinctive ministry exists to serve the word, has no status apart from this service and has no sacramental character. As regards this ministry we make no distinction between men and women.

The threefold division of the ministry expounded in this statement seems to us unconvincing and certainly does not accord with our tradition which starts from the assumption that the single public ministry of word and sacrament exists for the *ministerium verbi*. This is laid upon the church as a whole, and this ministry is supported by other ministries. Our church order at present mentions elders, deacons, treasurers and church musicians. Together with the first-named ministry all minister to the task which is laid upon the community and which it performs in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Laying-on of hands occurs as a (visible) sign of this at all ordinations, but also in confirmation.

## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN WURTTENBERG (FRG)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg is grateful for the Lima convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry, as submitted by the Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC. We see in this an expression of the mutual respect of the churches for each other and a step on the way towards a common confession of the apostolic faith today which is encouraging and committing.

We discover in this something of the richness in which the gospel of Jesus Christ "as given in holy scripture and testified in the confessions of the Reformation" (Ordination Vows and Constitution of the Protestant Church in Württemberg) has also won stature in the life and the theology of other churches. We unite in this way the hope that these churches also recognize as Christian the way our church practises baptism, eucharist and ordination.

In these statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry we find:

- fundamental issues on which we agree (A);
- issues in which we discover something new and in which we are stimulated to making changes (B);
- issues about which we find we have critical questions and where we should like to add our proposals in view of necessary future work of the Commission on Faith and Order (C).

### On the statement about baptism

#### A. *We agree*

10. We welcome the expressed wish of the convergence statements on the biblical basis of baptism and of the presentation of its meaning as given in holy scripture (§§2-6).
11. We wholeheartedly consent to the Christological interpretation of baptism as "participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ"

## 24 *Churches respond to BEM*

(§3), also the fact that the establishing sign of baptism is seen and understood as gift of God (§1) and entry into the new covenant.

12. We acknowledge gratefully that in the convergence statements baptism means the incorporation in the body of Christ and constitutes a sign of unity and a call to overcome separation apart from any denominational narrow-mindedness (§6).
13. We completely agree with the rejection of re-baptism (§13). We oppose any negation of infant baptism on principle.
14. From the assertion that baptism takes place in the church as the community of faith, we affirm that baptism is usually to be celebrated during public worship (§23).
15. We much appreciate the fact that infant baptism is acknowledged as fully valid baptism and has to be accompanied by our readiness to lead the baptized children to Christ and his word and to support parents and godparents especially in their responsibility.
16. We are pleased about the insight that baptism has claims on the baptized person and implies ethical consequences. We are indebted to the Lord of our baptism with nothing less than ourselves "in all realms of life" (§10).

### *B. We discover something new and are stimulated towards making changes*

17. We accept gratefully the indication that baptism which is an unrepeatable act "needs to be constantly reaffirmed" (§14c). The proclamation of the grace of baptism must continuously remind us of what participation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus means for us. An "annual celebration of the paschal mystery" (§14c) could be used for such a renewal of baptism vows.
18. We should like to emphasize the "rediscovery of the continuing character of Christian nurture" (§12). Both forms of baptism require an appropriate caring and follow-up teaching and training in the faith.
19. The convergence statements also cause us to use a more differentiated practice with the possibility of a responsible delaying of baptism in order to avoid the impression of "an apparently indiscriminate way" of baptizing

(§21 b).

20. We are also reminded that baptism "gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit" (§7). This enables us to correct one-sided individualistic traits in the understanding of baptism and to present baptism as incorporation of the individuals who have received the Holy Spirit into the community of the one church.

### *C. We have critical enquiries; we make suggestions*

1. We suggest examining anew whether infant baptism had not been as much practised in New Testament time (§11) as the baptism of adults

(compare e.g. the apostles' instructions). Even the early church practised infant baptism to a great extent.

2..We ask: Why is there not a greater emphasis on the meaning of conversion and rebirth (Titus 3:5) in the context of the biblical expansion on baptism?

21.From our Wurttemberg tradition we understand baptism as a "sacrament and a godly word-sign/Wortzeichen" (Johannes Brenz). The Spirit binds itself to the word which is inseparable with the sign. Therefore the "proclamation of holy scripture" (§20) during the service of baptism will not only be a reading of portions of scripture related to baptism, but the service will expand extensively the reason, joy and extent of baptism as promise and claim of the Triune God.

22.The sentence "baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift" (§8) appears to us insufficiently formulated. According to our understanding baptism is God's gift which we receive and to which we respond by faith or faithlessness, obedience or disobedience.

23.Many of us —though not all —have considerable reservations and questions where it reads: baptism is. . . "a liberation into a new humanity" (§2). The following is asked: We recall the eschatological reservation: We do not know biblically anything about a liberation into a new humanity through baptism (§2). According to our understanding baptism unites the human differences which exist in the church as the body of Christ. What is said about the church can —in our understanding —not directly be applied to humanity but is conditioned by mission, the work of the Holy Spirit and the consummation of the world. A testimony of the faithful baptized saying "that humanity can be regenerated and liberated" (§10) we think is Utopian; also the statement (§7) "baptism has a dynamic which. . . extends to all nations and anticipates Christ's coming". Certainly the testimony of baptism is universal; it concerns everyone. Just the same it is nowhere

stated that the whole of humankind listens and accepts gratefully this testimony. In this connection we query the meaning of these political-sociological terms "liberation to a new humanity", "liberated", "liberator of all human beings" (§§2, 3, 10) in regard to baptism. Do these terms nullify what the theology of the Reformation describes as justification/redemption?

#### **On the statement on eucharist**

##### *A. We agree*

24.We welcome emphatically the fundamental statement in the first sentence: "The Church receives the eucharist as a gift from the Lord" (§1).

25.We underline the Christological statements which are carried through the whole document:

— Christ grants communion with himself and gives assurance of the forgiveness of sins (§2);

## 26 Churches respond to BEM

- Christ is really present (§14);
  - Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the church (§29);
  - Christ invites to the meal (§29).
26. We underline that eucharist always includes both word and sacrament (§§3, 12, 27, 29). In the promise and presentation of salvation the sacrament becomes also God's word to us (§15; cf. our query in C. 1, also Baptism C.3).
27. We accept the presentation of the "real, living and active presence of the Lord in the eucharist" (§13 in the context of §§5-18).
28. It is important to us that Christ's sacrifice, accomplished once and for all, is so univocally stated (§§5, 8).
29. The understanding of eucharist as a communal meal within the body of Christ (§19) and as a foretaste of the heavenly wedding feast is alive in our tradition and has become more meaningful during the last few years.
30. We underline the ecumenical aspect of the meal as meal of the whole church (§19) as well as the mission to the world (§§20, 24ff.; compare question C.4).
31. It is important for us that the celebration of the eucharist is administered by persons who have been commissioned by the church.

### B. We discover something new and are stimulated to making changes

32. The convergence statements show us anew the varieties of the New Testament. We learn from this that the eucharist relates to the resurrection of Jesus with the same importance as to his cross and death, also that praise and thanksgiving are as important as the earnestness of repentance.
33. The thanks to God the Father (§§3f.) makes us newly aware of our relationship to the whole of creation and to celebrate it in the church service and to reconsider our responsibility for it.
34. The confident invocation of the Holy Spirit (§17) shows the trust of God's children as much as the total dependence from the giving God.
35. Our eucharistic liturgy contains one formula of the eucharist which is nearly in total accordance with the elements stated in §27. We are trying to make congregations more familiar with this particular formula.
36. Regarding the practice of reserving the elements (§32) we shall respect the practice of other churches and expect the same from their side. We treat the left-over elements with utmost respect (§32).
37. Our church has started to celebrate the eucharist more frequently.

### C. We have critical enquiries; we make suggestions

1. We cannot agree with the sentence "the celebration of the eucharist continues as the central act of the Church's worship" (§1), if it would mean that the eucharist part of worship was central against the preaching part, or if it would mean that God's salvation is in a lesser way administered in a preaching service. Even the sacrament is, as the promised salvation, the

word of God. According to the understanding of the Reformation, sermon and sacrament are the two fundamental forms of the one word of God.

38. From the Reformation point of view it is to be welcomed that the eucharist is defined as "gift of the salvation" in Jesus Christ with "the assurance of the forgiveness of sins" (§2). This factor is not so evident any more in the following sections.
39. As the convergence statements are concerned with the life of the churches and their relationship to one another, faith and hope of the individual Christian are not taken up on their own merits. The tension, characteristic for the church, between the body and its various members, the "faith of the church" and the faith of the individual, is hardly mentioned at all.
40. It should be stated at length that only the faith receives Christ's body and blood as salvation (§13).
41. The convergence statements underline justly the necessary relationship between liturgy and "service in the every day life of the world". The world as God's creation is always present in all worship on account of the faith in the Creator (§§3, 4, 23). But Christians become inconsistent (not "unworthy" as the German translation in (§20) renders "inconsistent"), if their worship has no consequences for their faith and obedience in all spheres of life (§§20-25). All the same one has to ask: Could the ethical implications not be that much understood as if the church were called upon to restore the "situation of the world"?
42. In the dialogue between the denominations the central question is the question about the meaning of the church. The convergence statements rightly answer this question by saying that Christ is Head and Lord of the church and works at the same time in the church as his body (§19). Nevertheless it could be that some of these sentences in the statement on the eucharist were still understood as if the church were the real acting subject in

worship (§§3, 4, 8).

43. The speech about the offering and hymn of Praise (Lobopfer) (§4) in the eucharist and about the offering of ourselves as Christians in our daily lives (§10) should not encourage the misunderstanding as though the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice would make the eucharist an offering to God.

#### **On the statement about the ministry**

##### *A. We agree*

1. We underline the meaning of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9), the "calling of the people of God" (§6). "The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witness into the world" (§1).

Within the priesthood of all believers there is an ordained ministry for the public proclamation of "the good news of the gospel and of the gifts of the

## 28 *Churches respond to BEM*

sacraments" (compare Confessio Augustana V), through which the church of Jesus is "continuously built up" (§1) and people are called "to turn in praise to God and in service to their neighbours" (§2).

2. It is right to call the church a serving community, a community which "the Holy Spirit bestows with diverse and complementary gifts" (§5), a community which realizes its mission in the various political, social and cultural circumstances.

3. We consent to the necessity of a special ministry into which the church calls people "who are publicly and continuously responsible for pointing to the church's fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ" (§8). This ministry is undertaken first by the ordained ministers of our church who make it known through their service in the congregation and to everyone: through baptism, preaching and "the eucharist Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church" (§14).

44. We also see "the chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry" (§13). The ordained ministers share this responsibility in certain areas with other people chosen for such service (compare §31: deacons).

45. Since 1968 we also practise the ordination of women. The ministry of the ordained woman comprises all the duties of parish work as executed by the ordained man.

46. We find the insight correct: the New Testament does not prescribe one particular structure of ministry which could serve as a model or even an obligatory standard for the present structure of the ordained ministry in the church (§19). Therefore the churches have in fact "to avoid attributing their particular forms of the ordained ministry directly to the will and institution of Jesus Christ" (§11 commentary), and make them obligatory for other churches.

47. We also trust in "the Holy Spirit leading continuously the Church in life, worship and mission" (§19). We acknowledge such leadership of the church through the Holy Spirit where a "three fold pattern of ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained

ministry" (§19) in some churches, and that "the ministry of the Word and sacraments" (§52) has become a ministry in other churches which has a

"special responsibility for the continued proclamation of the gospel in Word

and sacrament in the Church of Jesus Christ" (so stated in the Liturgy of

Ordination of the Protestant Church in Württemberg).

48. We much welcome the understanding of the apostolic succession as pointed out in §34 saying: "Apostolic tradition in the Church means

continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles:

witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the

Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of



ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, ■■■n vice to the sick and the needy, unity among the local churches and ■■■barring the gifts which the Lord has given to each."

9. We assert the responsibility of the church as a whole and especially the i rresponsibility of those called to administer the "orderly transmission" (§35) o l l he Christian faith and therefore of the "ministry" which serves the public proclamation of the gospel in preaching and administering the sacraments, I he calling to and confirmation of the faith.

49. We also understand that ordination is an acknowledgment by the i i m rch of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the one ordained, and a commitment by both the church and the ordinand to the new relationship (§44c).

50. We also hold ordination in a normal Sunday service in which the ordaining minister calls the ordinand to take up the ministry of the word of (iod in the church, trusting in the promise which Christ has given his church. The laying-on of hands is accompanied by the blessing in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit (§52).

*li. We discover something new and are stimulated to making changes*

1. As the "threefold ministry" is understood as a reminder of the essen tial basic functions (compare §§28-31) of the mission of the church, we have lo take these questions very seriously.

We recognize the need of a service towards the unity of Christians and of the church even though we consent to a variety of charisma in the congregation. This service is undertaken in our church by members of the congregation, appointed as church elders and delegates to the synod as well as ministers, deans, prelates and the bishop.

-We recognize the need to consider and reform especially the relationship between the service of the deacon and the ministry of the clergy (§31).

51. We are also reminded by the statement about the ministry to appreci ate anew the service of men and women who live in communities, diaconal institutions and orders as "a service which can be of great importance for the life of the Church" (§32; compare §45).

52. We are reminded of the fact that the study of theology is not in itself a qualification for the "ordained ministry". It also needs recognition by the church of "the gifts and graces of the particular person" (§45). We let ourselves be reminded that an appropriate preparation for the ordained ministry is, as well as "prayer and spirituality", a training which serves "to test, foster and confirm the candidate's call or to modify its

understanding"

(§47). We try to consider and take up these concerns in such a way that they will become not a law but a help; that they will be pursued and practised not as a matter of power but as a service.

*C. We have critical enquiries; we make suggestions*

1. "The Church is called to proclaim. . . the Kingdom of God" and to witness "by its very existence as the body of Christ" (§4). But we see that

expressions like: the church "prefigures" the kingdom of God and "the members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom" (§4) can be understood and judged differently. These issues need to be guarded against misinterpretation, as if to be Christian and to be church were only trustworthy if they identify with certain political aims and actions. We must remind ourselves in view of the proclamation and service of the church that our faith and work depends on the promise as well as the reservation of the coming kingdom of God.

53. Certainly the church of Christ needs and calls at all times and in all places people "who are publicly and continuously responsible for pointing to fundamental dependence" (§8) of the church and the faith in Jesus Christ. All the same the ministry is not in itself "focus of unity" and "constitutive for the life and witness of the Church" (§8). It is rather Christ himself in the gospel "focus of unity" and "constitutive for the life and witness" (§8) of Christians and the church. On account of this gospel there is a need for the "ordained ministry", for persons who are publicly and continuously taking up the responsibility for the proclamation in word and sacrament and who are called to doing this. Not the ministry but the gospel of Jesus Christ—for which the ministry exists at all — is the condition and ground for the existence of the church.

54. "It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it" (§14). Therefore the gifts of the altar and the words of Christ themselves are the visible focus of the close community with Christ which supports us. It must become clear that the ministry depends in its importance and weight solely on Christ. Yet the church needs particular persons for this ministry in order to administer and proclaim the eucharist. Therefore the church bestows them with the public proclamation and the administration of the sacraments.

55. In the celebration of the eucharist the ordained ministry has no greater

importance than in the celebration of baptism and in the preaching of the gospel. For Christ whom we preach (1 Cor. 1) reaches out to people in no less a way through preaching, baptism or eucharist and "the promise stated in the words of consecration" (§14 Eucharist).

56. We can accept the structure of the threefold ministry stated in §§19ff. as a guidance and possibility of the Holy Spirit, "who has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs" (§22). But we do not regard this structure of the threefold ministry which has been developed during the long history of the church as the only way to reach or express the unity of the church (compare A.7).

57. We could recognize the "episcopal succession as a sign. . . of the continuity and unity of the Church" (§38). But in our opinion ordination in all churches does not necessarily need the dependence from such an episcopal succession. Also for us the "act of ordination" is not a "sacramental

MI'.II" (§41) but an act of dedication to the "service of the Word of God which the church carries out in the confidence of Christ's promise and by the living-on of hands and blessings (compare A.10, 11).

7. In general we have the impression that the various arguments based on the traditions of churches and on holy scripture are not always clearly enough differentiated as one would wish (compare the tension between the issues in §§19 and 21 commentary on the one hand and the issues in §§20-^mid 36).

In conclusion the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wurttemberg declares.

These questions are for us so important that we ask them to be included in "The future work of Faith and Order" (preface). We also urgently stress the need for "the common expression of the apostolic faith today" even amongst the still separated churches in order to reach a mutual acceptance of the churches and its ordained ministries.

But already today we find that the actual and stated differences between us are not such that they could hinder us in accepting the baptism, eucharist and the ordination of these churches which can agree with us on the fundamental issues of these convergence statements.

# EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN BADEN (FRG)

Evangelical Church in Baden 33

## Foreword

*"The Faith and Order Commission invites all churches to prepare an official response to this text at the highest possible level of authority. With this request the Evangelical Church in Baden also was encouraged to respond to the convergence texts 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry'."*

*We here present the response adopted by our general synod at its autumn session in 1984. It has been transmitted to the Faith and Order Commission in Geneva.*

*It is addressed also in a special way to the parishes, especially to the ministers and those responsible for leadership in our church.*

*One can of course deal with such ecumenical texts in a wide variety of ways. One can examine them to see whether and how far one's own opinion and tradition are reflected in it. This is not in itself wrong. We have the right to put forward our own viewpoint. Therefore in our response there is always a section indicating what critical counter-questions and observations are put forward by our church.*

*But it is even more important to listen to what others say or believe. What can we learn? What conclusions do we reach? These questions point to a new attitude in the encounter with other churches and Christian traditions: not one of demarcation but of dialogue. This presupposes openness and preparedness to learn and its ultimate aim is what is meant in the Bible by "repentance", i.e. being constantly ready to turn anew to Christ. No ecumenical discussion is possible without this spiritual dimension.*

*When you read the response you will discover that it is not a mere list of synod resolutions. You will also find a lot of information on the history of our church with texts from the prayerbook and hymnal. What is taught and believed in a church finds its expression also in the piety and practice of worship in the church.*

*Thus this brochure can lead to a wide variety of discoveries of concern and interest to open-minded Christians, parish groups and church elders.*

*In the discussions which have taken place so far, the text on the eucharist has received particular attention because of the many suggestions for the theology and practice of the Lord's supper which are to be found in it. Work on this part of the convergence texts at pastoral meetings will be vital for the preparation of the main report to be written in 1986 on the theme "The Lord's Supper in the Light of the Lima Convergence Document".*

*I greet you all in the hope that all who in the coming months study BEM and our response to it may gain in insight, clarity and enthusiasm for service and worship in the church.*

*Hansjorg Sick*

## Our starting-point

Like its Lutheran and Reformed forefathers, the Evangelical Church in Baden has never regarded itself as a separate, clearly defined church, but rather as a member of the German-speaking community of evangelical churches and, beyond that, of worldwide Christianity.

The first ordinances at the time of the Reformation for the churches in the territory that was later to become Land Baden already showed a desire to "maintain uniformity" with neighbouring churches, and also to be open to a concept of an overall Protestant church. Thus when the hitherto separate territories with their different confessional backgrounds were brought together in the Baden Union of 1821, this was not merely the result of the formation of a new political unit but had been prepared over a long period of time by the desire for union expressed in many different ways. In the document of union, the "United Evangelical Protestant Church" spoke therefore of the "inner unity with . . . all still separated Reformed and Lutheran churches abroad" and described itself as "united in itself and in friendship with all Christians in the world".

In the meantime, this approach to the *communality of the whole church* is expressed in the current constitution of the Evangelical Church in Baden (1958/1972) when it states: "The Baden Church is a member of the World Council of Churches. . . as a church of union, she regards herself as under an obligation to overcome differences dividing churches and to help to make visible the unity of the church given in Christ through service in the world."

In the context of this requirement to *overcome the differences* between churches, the Baden synod welcomed and recognized in a resolution of 4 May 1962 the Arnoldshain Theses on the Lord's supper (1957) as "a helpful witness to the fundamental content of Protestant teaching on the Lord's supper". A further step was taken on 4 May 1973 when the synod approved the Leuenberg Agreement as a statement of interchurch communion between the Reformation churches of Europe.

### 34 Churches respond to BEM

Insofar as the church in Baden now faces the challenge of BEM then this is in accord with the requirement expressed in the Leuenberg Agreement "to serve the ecumenical community of all Christian churches". This includes being ready to learn from the spiritual experience of other churches, and also having the hope of being able to contribute its own spiritual inheritance to the ecumenical process of unity.

The only criterion which a church of the Reformation can apply with regard to the convergence texts and their question is neither church tradition nor the state church's custom, but only the witness of the holy scripture to Jesus Christ, "the Lord and only head of the church" (preamble to the constitution of the Evangelical Church in Baden). (For list of sources, see end of report)

## BAPTISM

### Introduction

58. The church has baptized from the very beginning, and thereby has obeyed the commandment of Jesus Christ, also known as the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18b-20).
59. The only early church creed which names baptism as an object of faith is the Nicene Creed. The practice of baptizing children began very soon in the early church. "We confess one holy baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."
60. The baptism of children has been in general practice since the early Middle Ages. The Reformers continued this practice. The baptizer move ments called by Martin Luther the "enthusiasts" were critical of this practice for various reasons. The Augsburg Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism have the following to say about baptism:

#### *Augsburg Confession*

IX. About baptism: It is taught among us that baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too, should be baptized, for in baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him. On this account the Anabaptists who teach that infant baptism is not right, are rejected.

#### *Heidelberg Catechism*

Question 74. Are infants to be baptized?

Answer: Yes, because they, as well as their parents, are included in the covenant and belong to the people of God. Since both redemption from sin through the blood of Christ and the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit are promised to these children no less than to their parents, infants are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant to be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This

was done in the Old Covenant by circumcision. In the New Covenant baptism has been instituted to take its place.

- I The *Document of Union* of the Evangelical Church in Baden (1821)
- I.1. lies that reception into the Protestant church and the parish takes place through baptism. Therefore home baptisms are rejected. Baptism is to take place in the local church, whenever possible during the Sunday service. (It is worthy of note that, even then, godparents were allowed to come "from the two main churches".)

*Paragraph 9: IV. Celebration of the holy sacraments*

1. Holy baptism according to the divine institution, in our church proclaims the provisional solemn reception of the baptized at the public worship of the faithful congregation by a teacher of the same, and it can only be celebrated in the presence of this church. The practice of baptism in the home that has become common mainly in the towns and among the upper classes is not in accordance with the institution and purpose of baptism. The ministers are required as far as possible to the best of their powers to stop this misuse, and to make sure that those to be baptized are brought publicly to the local church. The period within which baptism is to take place may depend on the state of health of the child, the time of year, the weather and any acceptable special wishes of the parents: but in no circumstances shall the baptism be delayed for more than six weeks. It is most properly combined with the prescribed services of worship in the week and better still on Sunday mornings or evenings, as long as the service does not become too long.

5. Like the Document of Union, our Baden Church constitution 1972 (1974) emphasizes that through baptism the baptized becomes a member of the local parish, the Church in Baden and the EKD (the Evangelical Church in Germany). At the same time the constitution emphasizes the ecumenical aspect of baptism: through baptism the members of the Church in Baden are "members of the community of Jesus Christ".

*Paragraph 5*

(1) A member of the Church in Baden is anyone who is a member of a parish. Every baptized Protestant Christian is a member of a parish as long as he lives in the parish and has not left the Protestant church or has become exclusively a member of another church community.

*Paragraph 6*

(1) The members of the Church in Baden are through baptism members of the congregation of Jesus Christ.

6. The present understanding and practice of baptism in the Church in Baden are formulated in the ordinance on holy baptism (as amended 16 April 1970). This prescribes infant baptism as the normal form of baptism.

4. Holy baptism is carried out as a rule for all children for whom it is requested. Whoever has his child baptized promises to bring up the child (or have it brought up) in the Christian faith. The parents fulfill their promise towards their child for whom they request baptism through intercession, by faithful attendance at the worship of their parish and by

practising the Christian faith in their homes, in addition to making sure that the child attends Christian worship, religious instruction and takes part in youth activities in the parish.

5. It is in accordance with church order that the children should be baptized soon after birth. The parents shall give notice in person in good time before the date of baptism. The minister conducts for the baptism. Baptism seminars can prepare for the ceremony of baptism and developing understanding of baptism in the parish.

7. In the last few years the general synod of the Evangelical Church in Baden has discussed various points arising out of the ordinance which had been submitted to it:

a) with regard to parents who wish to delay the baptism of their children for reasons of faith or conscience, it was decided to supplement the provisions of the ordinance.

6. Whoever neglects the baptism of his child or refuses it out of contempt sets himself against the confession and order of our church. He loses the right to be a godparent and the qualification for office in the church.

A pastoral discussion is to be held with parents who delay the baptism of their child through reasons of belief or conscience. If the parents adhere to their decision but at the same time are prepared to accept co-responsibility for the baptism of infants, they may retain their church rights. At their request the children may be put on the catechumenate list and may take part in religious instruction. The call to baptism remains obligatory for everybody.

b) Permission for a service of blessing (presentation) for children, whose baptism is postponed was refused in a decision of the synod.

2. A service of blessing (presentation) of children whose baptism is postponed is not admissible. Such children may however be remembered by name at the service in the intercession. They are to be accepted on application for the list of catechumens. Parishioners who are ready to accompany such children along the road to baptism are to be recorded in the catechumen's list.

8. It has hitherto been taken for granted for ecumenical dialogue that one could assume a reciprocal recognition of baptism in all other Christian churches insofar as the baptism was performed in the name of the Trinity and in the context of a Christian congregation. This reciprocity has been made doubtful by the practice of "faith baptism" of members of our church who transfer, e.g. by the Evangelical Free Church congregations and also similar practices by small, missionary societies and groups who regard infant baptism to be null and void.

The general synod's sub-committee on baptism made at the autumn 1983 session the following recommendation:

3. In the discussion about baptism believers' baptism and infant baptism are played off against each other — which in the light of the Lima document must no longer be allowed to happen. On several

occasions the general synod has expressed reservations about services of blessing for small children. But this is not under us from taking up and dealing again with the baptismal policy. Before the theological problem of a responsible we can offer the parishes a mixed discussion, however, before necessary to have conducted an objective theological discussion of the matter.

MinuteS autumn 1983, p. 290)

## Emphases (what do we consider important)

(We use the heading "Emphases" to indicate questions which in dialogue with other churches have particularly challenged us to think again, and also to indicate points of particular concern to our church which we wish to underline.)

1. *The institution of baptism in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (soteriological aspect).*

§1: "... It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and Lord. ..."

2. *The new life which is made possible (promoted through baptism and implications).*

§4: "... Thus those baptized are part of Christ, and are given as part of their baptism. Christ, and are given as part of their baptism. ...  
... d h id f h ... part of their baptism ...  
... ar>d sanctified by orientation under the guidance of the baptismal experience a new ethical Holy Spirit.

3. *Through baptism one becomes a member of the church which is the body of Christ (ecclesiological dimension).*

§6: "... Through baptism, Christians ...  
Christ, with each other, and with the world brought into union with ...  
Commentary 6: "The need to recover the ecumenical task as it is central to baptismal unity is at the heart of partnership within the Christian community (unities).

4. *Baptism as a sign of the breaking in of the kingdom of God (eschatological aspect).*

§7: "... Baptism is a sign of the kingdom of God and the life of the world to come."

(In presenting our comments below we have followed the pattern used by the synod of the EKD in their "Gesichtspunkte für Stellungnahmen zu den Konvergenzerklärungen".)

## 1. Common ground (where do we agree?)

1. *Baptism and belief belong together*

§8: "Baptism is both God's gift and human response to that gift."

2. *Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Every form of re-baptism is to be rejected.*

§13: "Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as 're-baptism' must be avoided."

3. *Baptism is the fundamental qualification for receiving the Lord's supper.*

In our church, children, already before they are confirmed, can in the company of adults take part in the celebration of the Lord's supper (see commentary §14 b).

4. *Mutual recognition of baptism by different churches is an important sign for unity.*

§15: "Mutual recognition of baptism is acknowledged as an important sign and means of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ."

5. *The administration of baptism, if at all possible in public worship on Sundays, belongs to the general practice of our church (see §23).*

## II. Questions for us (what can we learn?)

1. Firstly we can report that the BEM text on baptism led us into a process of learning which resulted in the new order of baptism adopted by the synod in the spring of 1984.

61. In the baptism service we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. This can be expressed through special signs. This is expressed in the liturgy through an epiclesis. The special sign for this is in our case the laying on of hands.

62. Other signs emphasizing in a special way what happens in baptism, e.g. the sign of the cross, baptism candle, the Hephata Rite (cf. §19).

63. The declaration that the person baptized has acquired a new identity as the child of God and as a member of the church (cf. §20).

64. The joining of the baptism of an adult with participation in the Lord's supper (cf. §20).

2. Other important questions raised by the baptism text for our understanding and practice of baptism are regarded by us as indications for further study.

65. The suggestion that baptism needs constantly to be reaffirmed (cf. §14 commentary c.)

66. The concern for a responsible baptism practice, whereby baptized children are nurtured to mature commitment to Christ (cf. §16).

67. The possibility for our church to recognize infant and believers' baptism as equally acceptable alternatives. In this context we must think again about our decision to reject a service of blessing for unbaptized children (cf. §§11, 12).

## III. Queries and reservations

1. In view of the elaboration of the *baptismal liturgy through signs*, it must be born in mind that the essential sign is baptism with water. This sign

should not be obscured by other meaningful signs or rites. It is for this reason that despite our openness, we remain cautious about the use of signs.

68. For the churches of the Reformation, while baptism opens the way to the Lord's supper, it is nevertheless felt that a proper preparation for reception should take place. A properly prepared participation in the Lord's Supper can give religious instruction a new dimension (confirmation classes).

69. The BEM text comments that some churches encourage "infants or children to be presented and blessed in a service which usually involves thanksgiving for the gift of the child and also the commitment of the mother and father to Christian parenthood" (§11). In our church we have serious misgivings lest the meaning of infant baptism would be reduced through such a blessing of children. Would it not be more appropriate for the infants to be named in the intercessions?

70. The statements about the Holy Spirit in §§17-23 could with advantage be taken up and used in §§8-16. This would make it clearer that faith, confession and discipleship are not human achievements but the work and gift of the spirit of God, and that therefore the growing into the fruits of baptism needs to be continually carried on through prayer.

## IV. Suggestions and recommendations (what are our conclusions?)

71. It is a matter of great joy and thankfulness to note that the churches are coming closer to each other and are converging in a fundamental way in their understanding and practice of baptism. The Evangelical Church in Baden is very grateful for the BEM text on baptism, and has profited from the results of the theological discussions, which are reported in it, in the preparation of the new baptism liturgy.

72. The recent discussions on baptism have laid great weight on baptismal renewal. This has been taken into account in the new baptism liturgy which was approved by the synod in spring 1984. It is noteworthy that BEM has



laid such emphasis on this point. We would be glad if attention could be directed more strongly on the liturgical practice of baptism renewal. In this way the responsibility of the parish for all baptized could be emphasized. Parishes should be able to develop many different forms of baptismal renewal, and see them as a source of growth.

73. Our church is in full agreement with the clear rejection of "re-baptism" (cf. §13). But some people who wish to profess themselves as Christians cannot understand this. The reason why baptism cannot be repeated needs to be explained in still greater detail and more carefully also from the aspect of pastoral care.
74. The relationship between the baptism of children and adults (or between infant and believer baptism) is viewed in the same way in our church and in BEM. "In both cases, the baptized person will have to grow in the understanding of the faith" (§12).

## EUCCHARIST

**Introduction**

The endeavour to preach, teach and share in the Lord's supper correctly is, according to Article VII of the *Confessio Augustana*, at the same time the endeavour to build the unity of the church.

VII: The church. . . . For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine word. . . .

Through its history as a united church, the Evangelical Church in Baden has always regarded this endeavour as its duty.

The following are milestones in this endeavour in the context of the Lord's supper.

### 1. The Document of Union 1821

Paragraph 5: Teaching. Since there are no other points in the teaching of the Lutheran or Reformed Church which are divisive, the *general synod agreed on the teaching of the Lord's supper* in the following sentences which are to be added to the Book of Teaching of the United Evangelical Church, without in any way wanting to exclude personal conscientious objections.

### 2. Synodical approval of the Arnoldshain Theses on the Lord's supper (4 May 1973)

75. The synod welcomes the Arnoldshain Theses as a major step forward in the discussion on the Lord's supper. It recognizes thankfully that the theses are suitable for enriching and deepening sermons and teaching about the Lord's supper.

76. The synod finds that the theses from Arnoldshain are in agreement with the intention of the Baden Concordia on the Lord's supper.

Fundamental biblical standpoints are expressed anew in them:

- In the Lord's supper we look forward to the coming of the Lord.
- In the Lord's supper we are united as the body of Christ.
- In the Lord's supper we are called to discipleship and service.

### 3. Synodical approval of the Leuenberg Agreement (4 May 1973) 1.

#### The Lord's supper

77. In the Lord's supper the risen Christ gives himself for everybody in the offering of his body and blood through his word of promise in bread and wine.

78. We cannot divide fellowship with Jesus Christ in his body and blood from the act of eating and drinking. An interest in the nature of Christ's presence in the Lord's supper without regard to this action, involves the danger of obscuring the meaning of the Lord's supper.

20. Where the churches agree in this way, the rejections in Reformation confessions are not applicable to the state of teaching in these churches.

### ■/ Synodical declaration on "eucharistic hospitality" (19 November 1974)

The declaration of the synod is as follows:

The Evangelical Church in Baden declares its policy of "eucharistic hospitality". If they so wish, members of other churches may receive the Lord's supper in our church on particular occasions. For example, celebrations of the eucharist on ecumenical occasions. Celebrations of the eucharist at mixed marriages, or at the confirmation of children from mixed marriages, etc. Members of our church may take part in the Lord's supper in other churches, as long as this does not go against their conscience.

*This Declaration should be understood as a contribution to the discussion of the eucharist in the worldwide church. This discussion should continue.*

V Joint Declaration of the (Roman Catholic) Archdiocese of Freiburg and the Evangelical Church in Baden (8 July 1980): "Worship and Occasional Offices as a Place of Encounter"

6. .... Together Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians confess that Jesus Christ is present in the Lord's supper as the crucified one, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, as the offering which once and for all has been given for the sins of the world ... So there is no repetition or independent offering apart from that of the cross.

The remaining differences "are located within an area of shared opinions".

Although we have already travelled such a long way in the history of our Maden church, we still suffer from the fact that we still cannot meet all brother and sister Christians at the Lord's table. We therefore regard the MEM text as a challenge to reflect on how we in teaching and practice of the Lord's supper can better fulfill today our church's duty towards the unity of the faith.

### Kmphases (what do we consider important?)

#### 1. Jesus Christ as giver and as gift.

The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit... God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. (§2)

2. The words of institution as the heart of the service and the means by which the confession made in the Lord's supper is brought to mind.

What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the eucharist is celebrated. The church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist. (§13)

3. The eucharist as sign and challenge to seek reconciliation and peace in the church and in the world.

The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. . . The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. . . The eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the world's history. (§20)

#### I. Common ground (where do we agree?)

1. The fundamental eucharistic concept in our church's tradition of the uniqueness of Christ's offering of himself is expressed in §8:

What it was God's will to accomplish in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, God does not repeat.

2. We are glad to see that the real presence of Christ as the centre of the eucharist is expressed in §14:

Yet it is the Father who is the primary origin and final fulfilment of the eucharistic event. The incarnate Son of God by whom and in whom it is accomplished is its living centre.

The Lord Jesus Christ as the centre of the Lord's supper is also expressed in a hymn sung at celebrations:

#### *Hymn 163*

O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you,  
in thanksgiving bow before you.  
Here with your body and your blood you nourish  
our weak souls that they may flourish  
O Lord, have mercy!  
May your body, Lord, born of Mary  
that our sins and sorrows did carry,  
and your blood for us plead  
in all trial, fear, and need  
O Lord, have mercy!

Your holy body into death was given,  
life to win for us in heaven.  
No greater love than this to you could bind us;  
may this feast of that remind us!  
O Lord, have mercy!  
Lord, your kindness so much did move you  
that your blood now moves us to love you  
All our debt you have paid;  
peace with God once more is made!  
O Lord, have mercy!

(German folk hymn, 15th century  
Martin Luther 1524  
Lutheran Book of Worship 215)

I. We welcome the statement in §19 that the celebration of the Lord's supper is the fulfilment of community with Christ and all the faithful.

§19: It is in the eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole church. . .

We recognize in this statement what has been written in the constitution

■ I our church and also in a hymn.

Paragraph 10. Where Jesus Christ is present through the Holy Spirit in word and sacrament, there he creates his community.

#### *Hymn 159*

79. Disciples of Jesus, you never forget this — we, who eat from one bread, and drink from one cup, are all brothers (and sisters) and members of Jesus Christ.

80. If we live together as a family, strengthening the burdened and protecting the weak, then we are fulfilling the last holy wish of the Lord.

81. Ah! his body must push us on. Lord, you should wish to fulfill this great work that under one shepherd we may become one flock.  
(After J. A. Cramer 1780)

#### II. Questions for us (what can we learn?)

##### *1. The eucharist as thanksgiving to the Father*

The celebration of the Lord's supper in our church is deeply imprinted with the idea of the suffering and death of Jesus and the seriousness of repentance. But §3 teaches us in a new way to understand what it means to say that the celebration of the Lord's supper is an act of praise by the congregation for God's good deeds.

§3: . . . It is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification, for everything accomplished by God now in the church and in the world. . . for everything that God will accomplish in bringing the kingdom to fulfilment.

In the preface of our liturgy we thank God for redemption and sanctification.

It is truly good, right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent as the salvation of the world, that through his death we may be forgiven our sins, and through his resurrection we may gain life. . .

On the other hand, thanksgiving for the creation and the gifts of creation are missing in the liturgy. This is not to say that this form of thanksgiving is missing in the lives of our church members. It is often to be found in the grace before meals.

Since we thank God the Father for the creation and the gifts of creation especially on the Sunday jubilate and at harvest thanksgiving, we should reconsider how this thanksgiving may be incorporated in the communion liturgy on these days. Furthermore, this aspect should be taken into consideration in all celebrations of the Lord's supper.

### 2. *Reference to the Trinitarian dimension of the eucharist*

Whereas the Reformation view of the Lord's supper was largely determined by the second article of the creed, the wording of §§14 and the following draw our attention to the Trinitarian event in the Lord's supper:

§14: The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love which makes it possible and continues to make it possible. . . . Being assured by Jesus' promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, . . .

Here we are reminded of the activity of the Holy Spirit who in the eucharist sanctifies and renews the congregation, and thus gives a foretaste of the kingdom of God (§18). In the liturgy of our church there are only very occasional references to the activity of the Holy Spirit:

In his name we pray to you, Lord: send down upon us your Holy Spirit, sanctify and renew us in body and soul and give that we receive in this meal in true faith the body and blood of your son. Bring together from the ends of the earth your chosen ones into your kingdom and let us in confidence await the return of your son. Yours be the glory for ever and ever.

Therefore we recognize that the celebration of the Lord's supper in our church as witnessing to the Trinitarian faith is not yet so developed as in BEM. If the celebration of the Lord's supper is based on the prayer to the Father through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, then it becomes important for us to understand the whole celebration as one complete prayer.

### 3. *Participation of children in the Lord's supper*

The commentary to baptism §14 has prompted us to think again about baptism as opening the way to communion: ". . . the question arises as to how a further and separate rite can be interposed between baptism and admission to communion."

While we see this as a justifiable question on our church's admission practice for the Lord's supper, we are not sure whether the description of a "separate rite" really corresponds to our practice.

In our church also, admission to the Lord's supper is basically through baptism, but following 1 Corinthians 11 we hold that instruction is necessary in order to be able to distinguish the body and blood. We have begun to take the first steps to meet both these conditions.

Resolution of the synod on the question of participation of children in the Lord's supper (21 October 1977). The question as to the participation of children in the Lord's supper comes up again and again. It seems best at the present moment not to give a final ruling, but to give the parishes further guidance in making the right decision. Therefore the following has been decided:

1. The necessary condition for participation in the Lord's supper is not age but suitable preparation and instruction.

82. With permission of the parish council young children, e.g. as from primary school age, may, after an appropriate preparation, participate in the Lord's supper.

83. The preparation can take place in the family, in courses or groups. The minister is responsible for a suitable preparation.

Guidelines for the participation of confirmands in the Lord's supper:  
4.2. Because the decisive experiences of the congregation as the body of Christ include participation in the Lord's supper, it is possible in our church for confirmands during their period of instruction to share in the Lord's supper. In this case it is important that instruction about the Lord's supper should take place at the beginning of the confirmation course. The parish council decides about the participation of confirmands before their confirmation. The views of the congregation about this decision should be taken into account.

On the whole it must be said that the admission of children to the Lord's Supper is not common and is not the rule in our parishes.

### 1. *Treatment of the elements of the Lord's supper*

Paragraph 32 states that: "Regarding the practice of reserving the elements, each church should respect the practice and piety of the others."

The point brought to our attention here as to the correct treatment of the elements of the Lord's supper raises the following questions for us:

In our treatment of the elements do we behave in a suitable way vis-a-vis our Lord and his gifts? -Do we take these gifts seriously enough? -Is our treatment of the elements a stumbling-block for Christians in other churches?

Since the treatment of the elements in our church is not governed by uniform rules, it needs to be reconsidered in the light of these three questions. In this context there are other considerations to be taken into account.

The ecumenical viewpoint warns us to be careful and hold back a little as regards the growing practice of celebrating the Lord's supper in our church without alcohol.

We should also keep the ecumenical aspect in mind at *agape* celebrations. On the one hand we have established that "the *agape* as a substantial meal celebrated with thanksgiving to God is a reminder that every gift comes

from God. . . An important aspect of the *agape*, i.e., the feeding of those in need, is gaining in significance today. The church exists for others (bread for the world). The *agape* is an encouragement to practical action and indicates the source from which Christian love is nourished."

At the same time, however, it is noted that "the Lord's supper and a parish supper point in the same direction and have a common reference. Nevertheless they must be distinguished from each other and cannot be equated with each other. This also applies where the Lord's supper is held in connection with or in the middle of the *agape*" (*Materialsammlung für Gottesdienst in neuer Gestalt IV*).

### III. Queries and reservations

#### 1. Is a service without a celebration of the eucharist "worship" in the full meaning of the word?

We ask this because of the statement in §31 that "it is appropriate that the eucharist should take place at least every Sunday". Our church cannot support this statement because it bears the stamp of a concept of worship that attributes the presence of Christ pre-eminently only in a service including the eucharist.

We gladly support the rising number of Sunday celebrations of the Lord's supper, and are glad at the continually growing number of such services in our church. However on the basis of our understanding of the "preaching service" (*Wortgottesdienst*), as also from the many different kinds of worship celebrations reflected in the New Testament, we have practical reasons to hold open the variety of forms of worship.

#### 2. Is it appropriate to describe the intercessions of the church at the celebration of the eucharist as an "offering"?

The last sentence of §8 reads:

In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the church offers its intercessions in communion with Christ, our great High Priest.

We are of the opinion that this statement is in implicit contradiction with the previous sentences. We are anxious lest the *anamnesis* as central feature of the Lord's supper be supplanted by an unclearly used and ill-defined concept of sacrifice.

The central phrase "with Christ" in the Lima text is unacceptable and should be "in Christ" or "through Christ".

#### 3. Who is acting in the celebration of the eucharist: Christ or the church?

Paragraph 4 starts with the statement: "The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the church speaks on behalf of the whole of creation."

We are concerned that this does not adequately reflect our church's view that it is first and foremost Christ himself who is the giver, and the

congregation who are receivers. While it is clear that the church as the body of Christ participates in his action in the eucharist, nevertheless it is still above all a receiving church.

In our view the first sentence of §4 emphasizes too one-sidedly the church as the subject of the action. Christ speaks to us in word and sacrament. We answer in praise, prayer, confession, offering and service. That is the basic structure of service of worship and should be made equally clear in a eucharistic service.

We miss in this context the aspect of devotion whereby the church in its offering of thanks to God fulfills its commission.

#### ■/1. Communion as a meal of forgiveness of sins

a) We are in complete agreement with the EKD synod's 1983 statement:

We miss in BEM any clearer reference or even a separate section to the fact that the eucharist is unthinkable without the concept of personal experience of the forgiveness of sins. The Reformation tradition lays great importance on this point (cf. Leuenberg Agreement 15). (Gesichtspunkte für Stellungnahme zu Lima 1983)

b) To serve as a reminder of responsible administration of the eucharist and to maintain the pastoral nature of references to worthy and unworthy reception of the eucharist, it should be more clearly explained that any person who feels unworthy of receiving the eucharist because of his own life and his commitment in structures inconsistent with living as a member of the body of Christ should be encouraged to participate by referring to Christ who accepts us sinners. On the other hand a warning against unworthy reception should be given to anyone who thinks that he can receive the eucharist without giving up whatever is contrary to the will of God that makes life possible and sustains and protects it, and thus destroys the unity of the body of Christ.

### IV. Suggestions and recommendations

#### 1. Suggestions for further work in our church

84. In the current preparation of a new Order of Service I, the aspects of the BEM texts which relate to the liturgy of the Lord's supper will be taken into account and where necessary new material will be included, as was done

in the preparation of the new version of the baptismal liturgy.

85. The general synod's response to BEM will be sent to clergy conferences and parishes with the aim of making the stimuli of the Lima texts for communion practice bear fruit (increased celebration of the eucharist, inclusive service of worship, the participation of children in the eucharist).

As the subject for the next major report to the regional synods

(Constitution  
of the Church, para. 81/1 (c)), the theme of the eucharist is proposed.  
The  
report is to take account of the section of BEM on the eucharist, the  
general

## 48 *Churches respond to BEM*

synod's response and the study material prepared by the high consistory and the Roman Catholic Diocesan Ordinariat. In this way the various levels of the church should become involved in a lively exchange.

86. There is the need to think about new steps with the member churches of the local council of churches about intercommunion as well as about the possibility of developing further our "Joint Declaration" of 8 July 1980

(worship and occasional offices as a place of encounter).

Furthermore, we

should consider which forms of ecumenical fasting could be practised as an

expression of the suffering from our divisions.

87. We should endeavour to make the suggestions in BEM useful in school and confirmation classes, as well as in parish work and adult education.

The

theme of the Lord's supper should be dealt with more frequently.

The

school syllabuses need to be checked to see whether they can take up ideas

from BEM.

88. We need to be clear about the use of the different terms: communion, eucharist, Lord's supper and agape.

89. The intention of paragraph 2 of the Declaration of the Union of the Evangelical Church in Baden is to be respected: it must be made quite clear

in the individual statements of BEM as also in our own practice and

teaching that the connection with the Bible and confession goes

without

saying.

90. We need to reflect on how we can deal with the elements after the celebration of the eucharist so that it may be appropriate to the dignity of

the celebration and, in particular, that it does not shock members of other

churches. The liturgical commission is requested to prepare instructions for

dealing with the elements, for inclusion in the new prayer book.

91. We need to think again in the ecumenical context about the practice and rules of celebrations of the eucharist with members of the congregation

suffering from alcoholism.

92. In accordance with the basic decisions of the synod, we should continue in our church to give children the possibility of receiving the Lord's

supper (cf. resolution of the synod, 21 October 1977, and guidelines for

confirmation instruction).

## 2. *Recommendations for the Faith and Order Commission*

We recommend that:

93. The aspects of the Lord's supper which are important for our church and which are not mentioned in BEM should be noted in the process of

"reception" and passed on to other churches.

94. Our critical questions in Section III (queries and reservations) be taken into consideration.

95. In judging the form which the Lord's supper takes in our church, it should be seen in the context of the entirety of Protestant worship forms,

which above all else also includes the Protestant hymnody.

96. It should be accepted that the church's practice and concept of the Lord's supper does not need to be uniform in all areas and that fresh thought needs to be given to the fact that the variety of forms of worship and the different emphases which are thereby expressed serve to enrich the whole eucharistic celebration of the church.
97. In the continuation of what has been begun, an attempt should be made to prepare a convergence text on the "church".
98. The question of the Lord's supper without alcohol should be examined.

## MINISTRY

### **Introduction**

From the ecumenical angle, the aim of this part of BEM and the one that raises the most problems is to seek ways to the mutual recognition of ordained ministries. Such ways cannot be found unless the churches are prepared to examine "the degree to which they are faithful to the original intentions" of ministry in the church, and "to renew their understanding and their practice of the ordained ministry" (§51).

The churches of the Reformation have traditionally understood the ordained ministry as the "preaching ministry".

#### *V. On the preaching ministry*

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the gospel. And the gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits, but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

(The Augsburg Confession 1530)

Whoever exercises this ministry must be duly appointed.

#### *XIV. On the government of the church*

On the government of the church it is taught that none shall publicly teach or preach or administer sacrament without being duly called.

#### *GO paragraph 46*

The public preaching of the word and administration of the sacrament through which Jesus Christ gathers and supports his congregation, is the task of members of the congregation called to the preaching ministry of the church (constitution of the ECB).

At the same time every individual member of the congregation is charged to witness and serve.

#### *GO Paragraph 10*

Where Jesus Christ is present through word and sacrament in the Holy Spirit, he gathers his congregation. The congregation shows that it is alive by the fact that its members hear God's word, forgive each other and their fellow human beings, and celebrate the Lord's supper. The



congregation remains constant in prayer, confesses Christ in the world by virtue of the priesthood of all believers, and practises love in the community and service to all mankind.

*Paragraph 44*

The church of Jesus Christ and its congregations have been given the commission to bear witness to the gospel in word and deed. Through baptism every Christian is given the authority and is required to serve and witness in the congregation and in the world.

Thus it is appropriate when thinking about the ordained ministry to start out from the "calling of the whole people of God", i.e. the priesthood of all believers, since bearing witness to the gospel is the responsibility of all the faithful.

**Emphases (what do we consider important?)**

*1. God calls the whole of humanity*

"In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. . . The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world" (§1).

It complies with the biblical witness if the church and its ministries are understood as coming from the universal work of salvation of the Triune God. It is correct that this section begins with God's elective and saving action for all humanity.

*2. God commissions his people*

"The church is called to proclaim and prefigure the kingdom of God" (§4). "All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the church and for the service of the world to which the church is sent" (§5).

The whole people of God are called in the proclamation of the gospel and in their being the church to give witness to their experience of salvation. All members of the church are commissioned to confess their faith and to serve one another.

*3. Sharing in Christ's threefold ministry*

The service of those who have been ordained is integrated in the prophetic and royal priesthood of all believers, and together with this is founded on the threefold ministry of Jesus Christ. Thus the service of the ordained ministers must be seen in the context of Christ's acting in his church and of the calling of the whole church. These dimensions are also the basis for the ministries of bishop, presbyter and deacon.

"Derivatively, the church as a whole can be described as a priesthood. All members are called to offer their being 'as a living sacrifice' and to intercede for the church and the salvation of the world" (§17). From this, the commission of the ordained ministry, "who have received a charism and

whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands" (§7), can be interpreted and developed.

■/. *The duty to assemble and build up*

"The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ. . ." (§13). "These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way. . . but in a representative way, providing the focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community" (§13 commentary).

As ambassadors, ordained ministers are to proclaim Christ's message of u-conciliation. As leaders and teachers they call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ. As pastors, under Jesus Christ, they assemble and guide the dispersed people of God (§11). It is correct that the consideration of ministry should grow out of the question of its duties.

**I. Common ground (where do we agree?)**

99. The tradition of the Reformers is that the ministry starts with the calling of the whole people of God, and sees its commission as a sharing in Christ's threefold ministry. Question 31 of the Heidelberg Catechism (Why is he called the Christ, i.e. the anointed one?) describes the anointing of Jesus as "chief prophet and teacher", as the sole high priest, as the eternal king. Question 32 (Why are you called a Christian?) goes on to explain how (he) believer shares in Christ's anointing: only through Christ's anointing is it possible for the believer to confess Christ, make an offering of thanks, struggle against sin and the devil, and accept the lordship of Christ in eternity.

100. It is important to distinguish between "the basic reality of an ordained ministry" and the different forms which the ordained ministry has taken in the course of history (§11 commentary). The recognition of this difference makes possible the mutual recognition of ministries, as the specific forms do not have to be directly attributed to the will and institution of Jesus Christ.

101. The ordained ministry is rightly related to the choosing and sending of the apostles (§11). The description in §22 of the commission of

ordained

ministers is in line with the basic tenets of the Reformers. At the same time

§§8-11 incorporate important findings of recent research on the Bible and

church history.

102. The leading concepts in the discussion of ministry are correctly defined (§7).

Hence the right of the Reformers based on the Bible to reject the sacrificial priesthood as it had developed in the Middle Ages is confirmed by §17 in the discussion of the word "priest" for the ordained ministry, which is not acceptable in all churches.

5. The "chief responsibility of the ordained ministry" is formulated in a way that accords with the Ordinal of our church (§13).

On the basis of baptism all Christians are committed to giving witness and service in the world. All ministries in the church serve to fulfill this commission. The congregation has the responsibility to see that the gospel is publicly preached by those willing and ready to do so.

Dear Brother. You are now given the authority to preach, baptize and distribute the Lord's supper. Through worship, instruction and pastoral care you should share in building up the congregation, and encourage it to service in the world.

The witness of the holy Bible is the source of and guide to this commission.

The church's creed and discussion with your colleagues will strengthen you in the common faith and help you to proclaim aright the word of God for today. In your service you are part of the community of all colleagues and you will be accompanied by the intercessions of the congregation. Our church undertakes to stand by you and care for you.

(Ordinal of the ECB)

6. It is in line with the ecclesiology of the Reformation that the ordained ministers are intimately related to the community of the faithful (§12).

Their service should in no way be a hindrance to the variety of charisms, as is expressed in the Constitution of the ECB (para. 44.2).

## II. Questions for us (what can we learn?)

### 1. *The threefold ministry in the church*

We are genuinely challenged by the question whether the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons, which developed in the course of the second and third centuries, "has a powerful claim" to be accepted by our church. There is no uniform structure of ministry in the New Testament: the threefold ministry certainly has no "divine right". But it "may serve as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means of achieving it" (§22). On the other hand there is a contrast between this and the recommendation of Lausanne (First World Conference on Faith and Order 1927) that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems should be developed and be given "an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited church. . ." (§26C). This recommendation is not yet fulfilled by personal, collegial and communal ways of exercising ministry (§26).

Hence our church must strengthen and maintain — at the level of the parish, district, province and the whole church — the service for all believers in a synodical pattern of joint responsibility while at the same time reconsidering the different ministries and their relationship to each other in our church.

In this context our church would have to examine whether it can "ordain people who remain in other occupations or employment" (§46).

103. Has not the ministry of publicly proclaiming the word of God involve in practice a sort of monopoly ministry, in comparison to which

other ministries and forms of service are of no consequence?

104. The importance of leadership as a service for the unity of the parish in which the church is expressed in the constitution of our church.

### *Paragraph 45*

The members of the parish who have been called to the service of leadership carry a particular responsibility for the unity of the parish and the church in teaching and living, and to promote the solidarity and cooperation between members of the parish, church institutions and services. The Elders' Committee has a particular responsibility for leadership (para. 22).

The paragraph on the bishop of the province (para. 120) outlines the service of episcopal leadership, sets it in a collegial context and develops it in a description of responsibilities. Does the personal ministry of oversight (episkope) need to be extended in the sense of §29? For example, the responsibility mentioned there for church discipline has in our church largely disappeared. There is great aversion to the concept and the practice of "pastoral oversight" represented for example by "visitations".

13. Does not our church also need a separate ministry of the diaconate, which is part of the overall commission of the church, to bear witness to the serving ministry of the church? The definition in our constitution whereby service to one's neighbour and society is included "among additional services in the parish" falls short of the significance of the church's witness of service and does not properly relate diakonia to the over-all commission of the church. The church's law on the diaconate (26 October 1982) attempts to do this.

### *Paragraph 1*

105. Service to one's neighbour (diakonia) forms part of the Christian community's commission to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the world. All members of the parish are consequently called to the diaconate.

Diak

onia perceives the troubled human being whether nearby or far away in

order to help him. It tries also to help groups in their need, to identify the

cause of their problems and to contribute to overcoming them.

106. Diakonia in the discipleship of Christ as a turning towards one's

neighbour out of love of Christ means the whole man as God's creature

under the promise of the gospel. This is the special nature of such service,

and it must find expression in the motivations and objectives of the fellow-workers and in the arrangement of their work within the frame

work of the church's law of service and labour.

The definitions here given combined with §31 and §31C could encourage the forming of a diaconate. An objection must be raised to the concept of the ministry of those entrusted with a diaconal function. In church law they

are merely fellow-workers. But in §31 emphasis is given to their responsibility in the worship of the congregation. The commission for this ministry is

wider than that of a fellow-worker on the one hand or than that of the "parish deacon" (*Gemeindediakon*) on the other. Is it the case in our church that the different elements of the serving ministry have become separated from each other and have taken on their own separate existence in a way which is no longer in agreement with their original commission? It must be noted however that . . . "differences in ordering the diaconal ministry should not be regarded as a hindrance for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministries" (§31C). Moreover the first criterion for the formation of ministries in the church remains the question as to which way enables us to carry out the service entrusted to the whole church.

### 2. *Variety of charisms*

Our church also has the obligation to discover anew the variety of charisms which the church has been given and to equip the members of the body of Christ for their service (§32). In this process the "new impulses which often can only find their way into the life of the church in unusual ways" (§33) and come from individuals or groups, deserve special attention.

### 3. *Apostolic tradition and succession*

A distinction is made between apostolic tradition and succession; the starting-point for questions about the "succession of the apostolic ministry" is the apostolic tradition which is guaranteed by continuity in the permanent characteristics: "witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, unity among the local churches, and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each" (§34).

Our church is called upon however to rediscover the fullness of the apostolic tradition in these permanent characteristics and their relatedness and to inquire about shortages or bottle-necks.

The episcopal succession is regarded as "a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church" (§38). In this respect our church also can ask whether it should not introduce the apostolic succession and give approval in principle to common "signs of unity". It should be noted however that we distinguish between apostolic tradition and episcopal succession. Apostolic tradition is not for us restricted to episcopal succession.

### 4. *Ordination*

The risen Lord is the "true ordainer who bestows the gift" (§39). Thus ordination is an act of God through the community. The ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the congregation through their prayers and acknowledgment (§40). "The act of ordination by laying on of hands is at one and the same time invocation of the Holy Spirit

[*rpiklesis*), sacramental sign, acknowledgment of gifts and commitment" (§41).

We need to consider whether the ordination can be acknowledged as *fi* sacramental sign.

If ordination is interpreted this way (i.e. in relation to the ministry of the Lord) we shall not object either to calling the laying on of hands *^* sacrament. The church has the command to appoint ministers; to this we *^* must ascribe wholeheartedly, for we know that God approves this ministry and is present in it.

Apol. XIII If-

But above all else we need to think about our practice of ordination in the context of §§45-50, especially §46 which speaks of "the ordination of people who remain in other occupations or employment".

#### *Paragraph 46 of the constitution of the ECB*

(3) The responsibilities of the preaching ministry can be divided up into a great variety of services of proclamation, pastoral care *a*ld instruction. These can be carried out permanently or for limited periods by full-time, part-time or voluntary workers.

#### *Paragraph 47*

1. For exercising the preaching office, a call by the church (ordination) is necessary.

Do not the above provisions allow an extension of our ordination practice? We need to think about the reasons for an extension and the possible consequences.

### III. *Queries and reservations*

107. The *problem of the apostolic succession* is intimately connected to the difficulty of the entire historic development in the West. It was already in the

Middle Ages that the pope and bishops freed themselves from the early

church linkage of ordination and visitation: the ordination for the *pastor*<sup>l</sup>

ministry was overshadowed by an ordination to the sacrificial priesthood.

The Reformers called special attention to the ministry of word and *sacra--*

*inent*, reunited the ministry of the ordinator with that of the visitor *a*ld

thus returned to a correct understanding of the episcopal commission. In

view of the variety of forms of episcopal ministry in the different churches

and in their history, it is not possible to speak of the historical form of

episcopal ministry. Thus we cannot recognize that the Roman Catholic

Church, or any other church, has preserved that form, or even could

have

been able to preserve it. Therefore a "mutual recognition of ministries"

(§§51-55) has to be based on the acceptance that just like other churches our

Protestant churches have also practised the public ministry of word and

sacrament through obligation and obedience.

108. We have *questions arising out of the definition of the ordained ministry as the "focus for the unity of life and Witness of the community"* (§§13C, H,

14C). It is possible that here, in comparison to the unity, teaching and

ministry based on the presence of Christ, ministry has been over-rated and that the "visible focus" has been elevated too highly theologically.

109. *It is clear that in the text the episcopal form of church order dominates over that of the synodical and congregational.* For this reason many churches will find it very difficult to approve this text. The churches of the Reform are agreed that the unity of the church is not based on episcopal succession. Therefore it is important for us to make reference to the ministry of members of synods and of teachers: with reference to §26 we see the danger that the personal dimension of ministry is over-emphasized at the expense of the collegial and communal dimension.

110. *We cannot agree to the reduction of the New Testament "presbyter" to "pastoral ministers. . . in a local eucharistic community" (§30).* The biblical witness, the experience during the Reformation and the "Kirchenkampf" confirm the legitimacy and necessity of the ministry of elders in the parishes. The minister needs to be a member of a clearly defined group of lay people who together with him are responsible "for the spiritual discipline of the congregation" (§30). Here is a concrete example for the calling of the whole people of God (§6) and the community of ordained and laity (§12). Unless the presbyter (so understood) genuinely cooperates in this way, the congregation will remain unstructured and the charisms that the Spirit has given the individual members will remain undiscovered, and will not be used for the good of the church.

*Paragraph 22 of the constitution of the ECB*

111. Together with the minister, the elders form the church council. This council leads the parish and carries responsibility for the preaching ministry, the administration of the sacraments and the serving ministry.

112. In this responsibility the elders are called together with the minister to build up the parish, especially by assisting in worship, in pastoral care of individuals and groups as also in the diaconal-missionary

institutions  
and events in the parish.

This criticism of restricting the ministry of presbyters is also directed at us, because the prophetic-royal priesthood of all the faithful needs also to come alive in our congregations. The co-responsibility of the laity at all levels, not just at that of the local congregation but also in the particular church and in the whole church, should be recognized and correctly developed in those churches which (apparently) have preserved the historical episcopal ministry.

5. It does not seem enough merely to say that, whereas some churches ordain women, others refuse to do so (§54). On the way to unity it is not possible to demand that all churches ordain women, but it can be expected that the ministry of ordained women be recognized by other churches. Our church is grateful for the ministry of women in parishes, hospitals, religious education and elsewhere. We wish to make quite clear the beneficial experience we have gained through the ministry of ordained women.

6. We refer with thanks to the ministry of Catholic nuns over the centuries, and of Protestant deaconesses.

#### IV. Suggestions and recommendations

113. The church is called to proclaim and prefigure the kingdom of God (§■1). In accordance with Barmen III also, we have to learn again that the (lunch "must by its faith and its obedience, by its message and its discipline, demonstrate in the midst of the sinful world as the church of pardoned ■.Miners, that it alone belongs to God. . .". Although the laws of the church are not "divine law" they bear witness to it. *If this is accepted, then the patterns of ministry in the church, the relationship between ordained and lay forms of ministry, and the question of personnel development and pay structure should be examined on a regular basis.*
114. The theses on the *conditions for ordination* (§§45-50) need to be considered in relation to the practice of the Church in Baden. This process should include the training of candidates for ordination as well as the action ;md understanding of ordination.
115. *Our church should follow up the question of creating vigorous forms of ministry, particularly diaconal but also the presbyterial (in the sense of lay ciders) and the episcopal ministry* — at the level of the parish, district and province. Here the structures which are already available need to be filled with life (diaconate).
116. We need to examine how the *links between our church and the world wide church* can be intensified. Here the question of unity will always need to be seen in the light of the truth. Concretely it will be a question of the reception processes of the church as a whole. At the same time suggestions can be developed for making better use of the overall structures and institutions of the Evangelical Church in Germany in such a way that the parishes are able to experience them; the same can be said also for

our relationship to the WCC, the Conference of European Churches, the Evangelical Mission in South-West Germany, and the Council of Christian Churches in Germany, at the different levels of our church.

5. We ask the Faith and Order Commission what *possibilities it sees for working towards a basic mutual recognition of ministries*, so that progress towards unity can really be made.

#### SERVICE IN THE WORLD

Living out the faith as service in the world:  
Consequences from the Lima text

#### Introduction

1. Our Church in Baden is on the long journey to the ecumenical community of all churches and Christians. The stations which we have



passed through so far were the union of the two Evangelical churches in the Grand-Duchy of Baden in 1821, the declaration of the community with the WCC contained in section 2.2 of our 1972 constitution, our joining the Baden-Württemberg Council of Churches in 1973, and our joining the Evangelical Mission in South-West Germany in 1972 that links us to the neighbouring churches in Germany, missionary societies and partner churches overseas, and lastly cooperation with the evangelical minority churches through Gustav-Adolf-Werk and the membership of "Faith in the Second World" since 1984.

The Lima texts of the WCC ask us to take a further step by asking what implications the convergences on baptism, eucharist and ministry have for our particular church.

2. BEM regards faith and action as having an intrinsic unity, so that word and service, spirit and finance cannot be dissociated. This intrinsic unity is threatened by provincial thinking and particularities and by in fighting over the distribution of resources and personnel. We need a new perception and new criteria for responsible housekeeping and ministry.

The BEM document attempts to relate the theological, liturgical and ethical aspects of baptism, eucharist and ministry to each other. The object of this response to BEM is to seek the wholeness of the Christian faith and to translate it into the order and life of our provincial church. In this process we will perceive the "ethical implications" arising out of the sacraments and ministry in a way that is unfamiliar for us.

3. The following texts are a challenge to make this attempt:

a) *The theological Declaration of Barmen para. 1934:*

2. "Jesus Christ was made for us by God to be wisdom and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). As Jesus Christ is God's promise of forgiveness of all our sins, he is thus and with equal seriousness also God's powerful claim to our whole lives; through him we receive joyful liberation from the godless bonds of this world for thankful service to his creatures.

We reject the false doctrine of the existence of areas of our lives in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords and in which we do not need justification and sanctification by him.

117. *Gesichtspunkte für Stellungnahme (EKD-Synode 1983)*, p. 18, which emphasizes that faith must authenticate itself in practical action.

118. *Constitution of the Evangelical Church in Baden (1972)*

*Paragraph 10*

Where Jesus Christ is present through word and sacrament in the Holy Spirit, he gathers his congregation. The congregation shows that it is alive by its members hearing God's word, forgiving each other and their fellow human beings, and celebrating the Lord's supper. *The congregation with its members holds fast in prayer, confesses Christ in the world by virtue of the priesthood of all believers, and practises love in active community and in service to all mankind.*

*Paragraph 68*

The Baden Church with its deaneries and parishes *has a responsibility for mission to the world*. It fulfills this commission through membership of the Protestant Missionary Society of South-West Germany, and collaboration with other missionary societies in its area and missionary working parties and also with partner churches all over the world.

*Paragraph 70*

The Baden Church with its deaneries and parishes is under an obligation and is to work together ecumenically with all churches and Christian communities. It therefore encourages ecumenical collaboration at all levels by arousing consciousness and ecumenical responsibility; it encourages the formation of interchurch working groups.

*Paragraph 71*

The Baden Church with its deaneries and parishes is under an obligation *to serve the evangelical minority churches* and evangelical Christians in the *diaspora*. It assists existing institutions performing this service.

*Paragraph 72*

The Baden Church recognizes that it has co-responsibility for *questions of development*. It does this in its own area within the framework of the EKD and in ecumenical cooperation.

d) *Section 1 of the church law on the diaconal work of the Evangelical Church in Baden* (see Section II, 1.3 above)

### **1 mphases (what is important for us?)**

119. Baptism is the gift of God and aims at a human response, i.e., a process of growing into faith and at a sanctification which embraces the whole of life. We see this expressed in BEM where it speaks of the ethical implications of baptism: "thus those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by (Christ, and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (B4). . . . "Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world" (B7). . . . "Likewise, Christians acknowledge that baptism, as a baptism into Christ's death, has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life" (BIO).

120. The *eucharist* is the gift of our Lord and a visible sign of his love for us.

It requires from those who belong together as brothers and sisters of Jesus

Christ that they practise reconciliation and live in community with each other, and it demands from them that they commit themselves to serve for a just and human world. "The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. . . . The eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the

## "spond to BEM

world's history.

th<sup>^H</sup> We <sup>AS</sup> Part<sup>ci</sup> pants m the eucharist, therefore, we prove in-3 /W  
S Situ<sup>^e</sup> not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of |

mistry; T<sup>ion</sup> and the human condition. . ." (E20).

di ? Wor<sup>Ue</sup> relationships between the calling of the people of God to i

e gify<sup>anc</sup> j diaconal work is made particularly clear where BEM j

People. . S<sup>o</sup> f<sup>me</sup> n<sup>o</sup> ly Spirit which are "for the common good of the

' ^' I' ^ members are called to discover, with the help of the

u<sup>at</sup> fifts they have received and to use them for the building up

A C r l' o \$<sup>or</sup> t<sup>ale</sup> service o f the world to which the church is sent"

ln \*~"riS|'rity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ. . .

■ e<sup>co</sup> v has entered into the human situation, so eucharistic liturgy

such (t<sup>cre</sup> and particular situations of men and women. . . (The<sup>^aco</sup> ms- ■

exe rministry) between the table and the needy... (E21) <sup>1</sup> c

(Vhplify the interdependence of worship and service in the 131).

## I- Common oi-n

^n d(w h e d<sup>o</sup> w e a g r e e ?)

^f history our Union Church in Baden has experienced how

' n e Ca<sup>^</sup> found its expression in its constitution, in decisions of the rl t' w

Vart<sup>ccntsm</sup> hymnbook and prayerbook. In these documents we ln T<sup>be</sup> ^ty

of statements which, similarly to BEM, make clear the "OvVween faith and life,  
preaching and serving.

ing sections we give examples of such statements:

## Baptism 1-

1. The C<sub>h</sub>

The

1970:

holy baptisA

curse of sin r<sup>l</sup> ^<sup>^t</sup>265<sup>tn</sup> obedience to the command of Jesus Christ. In

him a merni<sup>r</sup> me Triune God receives the individual, frees him from the

thanks aga<sup>nd</sup> deatn<sup>r</sup> 8i<sup>ves</sup> him as child of God all good gifts and makes /r...

, &<sup>d</sup> \<sup>er</sup> of his community. The baptized wishes to believe this with

to it through active love.

Irch Order of

(Introduct > y e baptie

Mn each day and gives witness 1

## -2. Hymn &gt;n p. 3)

(1) I am bj 152 (Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch)

God, p, . . . I have /Ptized ln y<sup>our</sup> name -amon

^at|ier<sup>^</sup> ^on anc| Holy Spirit. I have^reen counle<sup>c</sup> amongst

your seed, I hav ^y<sup>our</sup> people, whom you make

holy.

(5) I give ?unk into Christ<sup>r</sup>

^o611 g<sup>iven</sup> his Spirit. ou anew as an offering, my

God, r>Y<sup>sout</sup> and ^eart<sup>^</sup> Don't ^v<sup>16</sup> mt0 a new

f<sup>a</sup>ithfulness, Lord ^assess<sup>ion</sup> o f my being.

' Met there be any drop of blood in me, Which

doesn't do your will.

## 1.3. Catechism

Question 75: How does the new life prove itself?

Answer. The new life must prove itself in what we do and abstain from doing every day, especially in our work and in the divinely ordained communities of family, nation and church.

## 2. Eucharist

2.1. Thanksgiving prayer after the reception of the Lord's supper (prayerbook p. 425)

Lord, we thank you that you have refreshed us through the beneficial gift of your body and blood, and so we pray:

Through your goodness give us,

that the ears, which have heard your praises, may be closed to strife and discord,

that the eyes, which have seen your great love, may see your blessed blessed hope,

that the tongues, which have sung your praises, from now on may bear witness to the truth,

that the feet, which have stood in your presence, from now on may walk along the way of light.

and that the bodies, which have consumed your living body, from now on may be changed into a new life.

Yours be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2.2. General Synod Resolution on the Arnoldshain Lord's Supper Theses (4 May 1962)

(a) Synod Resolution:

121. The Synod welcomes the Arnoldshain Theses as a genuine progress in the Lord's supper. It is glad to see that the Theses are such as to enrich

and deepen preaching and instruction in the Lord's supper.

122. The Synod considers that the Theses are in line with the Baden

Concord on the Lord's supper. They develop afresh certain important

biblical concepts:

"At the Lord's supper we look for the coming Lord,

"Through the Lord's supper we are joined to the body of Christ,

"At the Lord's supper we are called to serve our brother."

(b) Arnoldshain Lord's Supper Theses 7.2:

We are brothers in the congregation to which the Lord gives himself in the supper. This community exists only from the love with which he first loved us. The way in which he has accepted us — the just of the unjust, the free of the unfree, the high of the low — shows us how we also should share all that we are and have with all those who need us.

1. Ministry 3.1. The Ordinal (Arnoldshainer Konferenz 1972 p. 34)

Intercession:

Lord, our God, you wish that the congregations be led through your word, so we call your holy name over this brother and pray: strengthen

him with the gifts of your Spirit that he may fulfill his ministry according to your will as a faithful householder and fraternal *helper*.

## 62 Churches respond to BEM

Address to the congregation:

Dear congregation, I exhort you to respect the service of the minister who has been inducted today, to help him and to pray for him, remembering *that we are all through our baptism called to witness and service in the world.*

3.2. Order of Service for inductions, appointments and presentations (parish assistants, social assistants, etc.) (Arnoldshainer Konferenz 1974).

4. The spiritual dimension in financial and other housekeeping aspects of church life.

4.1. Induction of church elders (see 3.2 above, p. 17):

... "deal *conscientiously with the money* of the parish and *behave* in such a way that your witness is not in doubt."

4.2. "Word for the parishes" (minutes of the spring synod 1981):

The Synod acknowledges that we as a province church and as its members, are involved in our welfare-seeking industrial society. . .

We call upon our parishes and their members to do everything in their power in the discipleship of Christ to recognize their own involvement in this system and to work together to change it.

4.3. Consultation of the Protestant Missionary Society of South-West Germany, 1983:

The consultation emphasizes *the spiritual dimension of financial management* and the importance of mutual dependence in the body of Christ. The receiving and giving of money is a visible expression of the evangelical and ecumenical consciousness in the proclamation of the gospel and sharing in the continuing service of the church of Christ. Therefore the consultation adopts the following recommendation:

Mutual responsibility and dependence on the body of Christ requires a constant exchange of information, regular consultations, exchange of audited accounts, so that partnership may become a reality, evaluation be made easier, changes made possible and Christian housekeeping be encouraged.

4.4. Hymn 190 (*Evang. Kirchengesangbuch*) based on Psalm 119.

123. Happy are they who before God become holy  
and live and work according to his word,  
those, who seek God and bear witness to him,  
live with him in grace.

124. I speak from my heart: I thank you  
all the time, since you teach me the right way  
to be just. Let your grace continue to help me,  
I want to obey you, never leave you.

(3) My heart remains faithful to what your word  
teaches. Lord, deal well with me, otherwise I  
will fall. Faithful God, if you lead me, so can  
I follow the way of your commandments.

(4) Lord, your word never goes, it remains in eternity, it  
remains like the sky which is always in motion. Your  
truth always remains just as the earth which your hand  
made.

## II. Questions for us (what can we learn?)

1. When we encounter other churches with their traditions, problems and joys, we discover and experience the variety as an enrichment. Ecumenical community of the churches means a joyful community in learning. This opens up interesting areas of learning. There can, however, also be painful discoveries. BEM can help us to avoid dangers of one-sidedness and narrowness in the teaching and ministry of our church:

through a spiritualizing of the biblical message to the detriment of its practical implementation;

- through an activism that gives little importance to the grace and promises of God but expects everything from humanity; - by concentrating on worship and preaching alone to the exclusion of our responsibility for the world.

Though already in 1980 the world missionary conference in Melbourne pointed out that:

Social action can become impatient activism. . . worship can become private pleasure. . . We believe that both aspects of discipleship need to be held together in the Christian life: Collecting and sending, receiving and giving, praise and work, prayer and struggle. 2 The implications of this are as follows:

a) *For baptism*: God's gift expects our answer and pledges us to responsible membership of the body of Christ (cf. BIO).

It is clear that baptism has a high theological claim which should express itself in the life of the church and individual Christians.

b) *For the eucharist*: The eucharist challenges us to share responsibility in social economic and political life, but equally in the service of the church, in diakonia and mission (cf. E20,21,25,26). The Lima text lays great weight "on the consequences which the celebration of the eucharist has for the **activity** of Christians in the world" (E10,20,21,25). These detailed sections make fruitful a fundamental discovery of contemporary theology. In now these aspects have in the Reformation tradition usually been recognized only in the personal sphere (reconciliation with one's enemy). Would it not be an enrichment of our celebrations of the Eucharist, if the meaning of reconciliation in Christ at the table of the Eucharist were incentive for the service of reconciliation in the world?<sup>2</sup>

1 *Taufe, Eucharistie, Amt. Konfessionskunde*, Institut Evang. Bund, p. 1)

2 *Leuenberger Lehrergespräche* pp. 12-13.

And Borovoy said at the WCC Assembly, Vancouver 1983:

If the eucharistic bread is the bread of eternal life, and if we, when we break it, share in the eternal meal of the lamb in the kingdom of God, and become united with Christ and with each other, so it is only completely natural that we pledge ourselves to struggle against hunger, want, poverty, sickness and all forms of social injustice and evil under which our brothers and sisters, our fellow human beings have to suffer.

As members of the body of Christ and those who have shared the one bread and the one cup in the holy eucharist, we are responsible for them before God, since together we form the one family of the children of God, the family of our brothers and sisters.

c) *Ministry*: The conditions for and conduct of the ecclesial ministry must conform to the "ethical implications" (M47,50). "What role do worship and the Lord's supper play in the *diakonia* and what role does the *diakonia* play in worship? The foundation of the diaconate in the eucharist is a challenge for us to think self-critically about the embodiment of the *diakonia* in worship and the Lord's supper.

"Has not a false concept of 'representation' or a principle of delegation liable to misunderstanding led to the position where '*diakonische Werke*' are regarded or regard themselves as a substitute for a diaconal church?"

"On the other hand, has the extension of the internal mission in the welfare state not led to a social service church in which action groups can act without any reference to a parish, to worship or the Lord's supper?"<sup>3</sup>

3. Does BEM give any guidance as to a church's right of control over its own finances and the duty to share these with other churches, and where are the boundaries? What is the meaning of a church's "possessions", and who are we thinking of when we speak of our duty to look after our own employees?

a) Church constitution, section 135 on the resources and budget of the church:

125. The entire resources of the parishes, districts and the Baden Church are to serve for the proclamation of the word of God and the *diakonia*, and may only be employed for the proper execution of the Church's commission.

126. When a parish, district or the Baden Church receives donations, they may only be accepted if the purpose of the donation in no way contradicts the commission of the church.

127. The Evangelical Supreme Church Council is empowered to make rules for the administration of the church's resources.

128. Is it correct that Paul (in 2 Cor. 8:14ff.) considered the purpose of the collection to be that of an "ecumenical equalization of burdens"?

129. Section 73 of the church's constitution states:

The church, the districts and the parishes are to ensure that church life is diaconally conducted. . . They also seek to eliminate the causes of need.

What do these statements mean in view of the growing realization of the gap between rich and poor countries? Has the church committed itself to be concerned also with the socio-economic causes of this problem?

### III. Queries and reservations

#### 1. Baptism

If human actions follow God's action, is it then correct to receive a new ethical orientation as a part of the baptismal experience? In reality does baptism lead us into the new life or is it only a sign that God is leading us? The question of baptism as a sign of the kingdom of God needs to be examined.

Lewis S. Mudge writes:

The last-mentioned of these categories is no doubt the least developed. Throughout the drafting of the BEM documents pressure was felt, quite properly, to relate their subject-matter to the concrete witness of the church in the world: in such matters, for example, as justice and peace. The authors attempted to do this without either interrupting the flow of exposition or introducing themes which would be seen by some as extraneous, exhortatory or ideological.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2. Eucharist

We welcome the interpretation of "unworthy" (1 Cor. 11:27f.) in the context of the community instead of the usual individualistic interpretation. But we wonder whether this does not arouse expectations and demands which in practice have more to do with the putting into practice of the coming kingdom of God? W. H. Lazareth writes that "in relation to this important ethical interpretation (E20) the soteriological viewpoint disappears quite a lot into the background".<sup>5</sup>

#### 3. Ministry

In the context of the calling of the whole people of God and the Protestant understanding of the "priesthood of believers", BEM says too little about the lay non-stipendiary ministry. Church elders and non-stipendiary co-workers in the *diakonia* and church administration are responsible for "correct preaching, conscientious administration of finance and service in the world".

In the context of M19-25 we ask whether the threefold ministry described here eliminates the possibility of important new forms of

<sup>4</sup> Ecumenical Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, *Faith and Order Paper No. 116*, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> *Auf dem Weg zueinander*, ACK 1982, p. 44.

ministry, which could become important in thinking about the calling of the whole people of God and in view of future responsibilities. Could not new forms of ministry help movement towards the unity of the churches? <sup>6</sup>

The experience of God's pilgrim people in both the remote and the recent past makes it clear that new forms of ministry may turn out to have as much to recommend them as the forms that a church in a given time or place may have inherited. <sup>7</sup>

#### IV. Suggestions **and recommendations**

130. The synod of the ECB regards the ethical conclusions expressed in BEM about baptism, eucharist and ministry as the expression of the unity of faith and service in the world. The synod emphasizes explicitly the meaning of the ethical implications of the sacraments for the renewal of the individual and the church at all levels in faith, teaching and action.

131. To make clear how salvation and wellbeing, faith and bread, spirit and finance belong together, the synod makes the following recommendations for several areas of our church life:

132. The liturgy for inductions, authorizations and introductions (Arnoldshainer Konferenz 1974) should be used in our parishes for the induction of all full and part-time workers.

133. The *Diakonische Werk* is requested to see that all its employees in its institutions are inducted (with this liturgy) in the local parish. The employees who have thus been inducted should be encouraged to take part in worship in their local parish.

134. The liturgical commission is requested to offer in the new prayer book alternative forms of blessing for Sunday worship, such as:

— You are sent into the world — therefore receive the blessing of the Lord.

— or the final blessing from the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity", 1983: The Holy Spirit who builds up the church and gives strength and wisdom to all the faithful, strengthens us to send us into the world. May the almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless us.

135. The liturgical commission is requested to consider the expression of community and sharing in the liturgy of the Lord's supper.

136. The liturgical commission is requested to include in prayers the memorial of the martyrs and intercession for persecuted Christians who, because of the way in which they have lived their faith in the world, have often suffered even today up to the point of their own death.

137. When discussing budgets in parishes, deaneries, church and diocesan institutions in the synod, we need to think of "sharing in obedience"

as an ethical consequence of BEM. We need continually to see the connection between paragraphs 135, 68 and 72 of the constitution of the ECB and paragraph 1 of the Churches Law for the Ministry of Love.

<sup>6</sup>Texte 7 Vorbereitungsgruppe der EKD Synode 1983.....Gesichtspunkte für Stellungnahme III 5 p. 15.

<sup>7</sup>One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry, *Faith and Order Paper No. 73*, 1975.

3. Every worker in our church must, as a consequence of BEM, make the close connection between the faith and lived service in his paid and voluntary activity clearer than before. This means that he will need to see the relationship of social, political and economic questions to his confession of Christ, and bring them into his church work.

#### List of sources for our "starting-point"

##### *Church Order — Kurpfalz, 1556 (Introduction)*

Until there is a general or clear decision of the majority of true Christians (we have the duty) to decide on a godly and salutary order for the teaching, sacraments and ceremonies of our churches.

##### *Church Order—Baden, 1556 (Introduction)*

. . . (publication of) a church order similar in form to the Augsburg Confession. . . not without especial regard to the majority of church orders drawn up by the neighbouring electors, princes and persons of rank. . .

##### *Church Order of Baden and Kurpfalz (identical) 1556*

. . . Just as in the past all sorts of hymns, readings, greetings and prayers were decreed alongside and in addition to the original institution of Christ, and several churches in which the pure gospel is preached still use them now, we also wish, if with God's grace a common useful and Christian church order should be prepared by the joint consultation of the Christian estates, to follow the same pattern.

##### *Document of Union 1821*

Paragraph 3: Through the establishment of the Union (the church) remains in inner unity both with the Evangelical-Reformed churches already united and also with those still separate and with Evangelical-Lutheran churches abroad.

Paragraph 10: So united with itself and in friendship with all Christians in the world, the Evangelical Protestant Church in the Grand Duchy of Baden enjoys the freedom of belief and conscience which our forefathers yearned for. . .

##### *Constitution of the Church 1861*

Paragraph 1: The United Evangelical Protestant Church of the Grand Duchy of Baden, which with the whole of the Protestant Church recognizes Christ as its only head, is part of the Evangelical Church of Germany. . .

##### *Constitution of the Church 1958/72*

Paragraph 2.2: The Baden Church is a member of the community of the World Council of Churches. With the Council, the church seeks to cooperate with all churches and Christian communities. As a church of the Union,

it is aware of its duty to overcome all differences dividing the churches and to make visible the unity of the church given in Christ through service in the world.

Paragraph 70: The Baden Church is committed and ready to work together ecumenically with all churches and Christian communities. Therefore it supports cooperation at all levels through the awakening of ecumenical consciousness and responsibility.

Preamble, Article 1: The Evangelical Church in Baden believes and confesses Jesus Christ as its Lord and as the only head of Christendom.

## EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RHINELAND (FRG)

The general synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland has adopted the following resolution. The church authorities are requested to send this statement to the World Council of Churches. The Evangelical Church of the Rhineland thereby complies with the request of the World Council of Churches for a



response to the convergence texts prepared by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

The synod asks the leaders of the church to encourage its members to give increased attention to the Lima convergence texts, referring at the same time to the documentation already available. (Resolution 51/Gen. Synod 85)

## BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY

### **Response to the convergence text of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches**

The document prepared by the Faith and Order Commission represents a statement of convergences. It points to converging

lines of theological discussion. We see it as an attempt to unite these lines, to hold fast to agreements reached despite the divergences still existing, and so to encourage further study of the questions remaining open. Concepts and thought patterns belonging to different traditions come together in this text. We see it as an opportunity for the Christian churches, each stamped with different theological teachings and ways of thinking, to learn to understand each other better and to be more open with one another. The confronting lines of confessional controversies are being broken up and altered. We

---

consider  
process to be a  
salutary one.  
Traditional  
positions are  
being  
questioned  
again, new  
links becoming  
apparent.

We consider  
the text as a  
whole. Some of  
the statements  
that may appear  
questionable  
when taken on  
their own  
necessitate and  
explain each  
other.

i 3,500,000  
members, 46  
synods, 819  
congregations,  
1,808 pastors.

We should like to interpret the text on the basis of the theology of the Reformation and make it clear where we are in agreement, but at the same time to be receptive to the ideas of other theological traditions. When we indicate our questions and reservations, we take up and continue the dialogue already in progress. We at the same time ask ourselves whether the doubts which we entertain individually or collectively are still differences dividing the church or only differences in theological doctrine expressing a legitimate ecumenical pluralism. Discussion of fundamental ecclesiological questions cannot be avoided if we are to arrive at decisions with reference to these doubts.

We are dividing our response under a set of headings, each sub-divided into (a) affirmative comments, (b) questioning of our own position and tradition, and (c) reservations and questioning of the Lima document. Synopses of the key statements in each part of the consensus document precede the various sections. They are not always literal quotations but convey the essential meaning.

The German translation does not give the exact meaning of the English text on certain not unimportant points. We have then referred to the English text and called attention to this in our reply.

### **Baptism**

We welcome the fact that all the statements relating to baptism are founded on the witness of the scriptures, particularly in §§1-7. This not only calls attention to the abundance of the New Testament pictures and descriptions of baptism, but also guards against particular stress on one aspect and against generalization.

In the light of this background we consider the questions which arise for our teaching and practice up to now, but also ask whether this fundamental approach is consistently adhered to throughout the convergence text.

This is especially the case with regard to the following themes which we consider especially important:

138. the part played by God and the part played by man in baptism;

139. baptism and the Holy Spirit;

140. baptism and faith;

141. the baptism of infants and the baptism of believers;

142. baptism and the community;

143. baptism and the unity of the church;

144. the significance of word and symbol in the celebration of baptism.

#### *1. The part played by God and the part played by man in baptism*

"Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, . . . entry into the New Covenant. . . gift of God. . . participation in Christ's death and resurrection, a washing away of sin, a new birth, an enlightenment. . . , a

renewal. . . the experience of salvation. . . and a liberation into a new humanity" (§2). "All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ's faithfulness unto death. . . points to the faithfulness of God" (§12)" . . . both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ. . ." (§12, commentary).

a) It is made clear in these as in many other statements that God acts upon man in baptism, and that in baptism the baptized person is to be seen primarily as the receiver, who in it participates in the Christ event.

The new life in Christ (§7), the new ethical orientation (§4), the unity of the church (§6), the common responsibility of baptized believers (§10) and the motivation to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life (§10) are clearly shown as consequence of God's action experienced in baptism.

145. Even if participation in the new life in Christ has always been seen in our church as one aspect of the baptismal event, its importance has often been overshadowed in the lives of the members of our congregations as a result of the almost exclusive practice of infant baptism. We therefore have to regard the raising of the baptized to new life following the liberation from sin in baptism (§3) and the dynamic possessed by baptism embracing the whole of life (§7) as a question addressed to us.

146. For our part we question whether the description of baptism as "a rite of commitment to the Lord" (§1) could not give rise to the misunderstanding that the baptized are in fact the actors in the event; likewise the wording to the effect that baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift (§8) could suggest that the part played by God and that played by man are of equal importance. Some of us also wonder whether expressions such as "a liberation into a new humanity" (§2) and "Jesus Christ, the liberator of all human beings" (§10) do not obscure the fact that not the whole of humanity is as yet redeemed.

#### *2. Baptism and the Holy Spirit*

"The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism" (§5). "God bestows upon all (baptized) persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit" (§5). "The Holy Spirit nurtures the life

of faith in their hearts until the final deliverance" (§5). "(In baptism). . . participation in Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the receiving of the Spirit" (§14). "Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures. . . an invocation of the Holy Spirit. . . " (§20). "All agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit" (§14).

a) That the gift of the Holy Spirit is bestowed in baptism is as clearly testified as that the Holy Spirit is at work both before and also after baptism (§5). Similarly the indispensability of the Spirit is recognized when "the promise of the Holy Spirit" is mentioned and the invocation of the Holy

## 72 Churches respond to BEM

Spirit is named as necessary element of the order of baptism (§20). In this connection the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of redemption is also brought out.

147. In view of the experience that many Christians among us find the working of the Holy Spirit difficult to understand, we shall have to emphasize this in the preaching at baptism more strongly than has hitherto been the rule (§14, para.1).

148. The wording of other statements seems to us to be less suitable: "the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit" is open to the misunderstanding that the Spirit is given *ex opere operator* in baptism. This misunderstanding reappears later when we read: "Baptism in its full meaning signifies and effects both" (§14) and further on: "Different actions have become associated with the giving of the Spirit" (§14).

### 3. Baptism and faith

"The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches" (§8). "Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ" (§9). "The life of the Christian is. . . one of continuing struggle yet also of continuing experience of grace" (§9). "Both the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the church as the community of faith. . . In both cases, the baptized persons will have to grow in the understanding of faith" (§12). "Those who practise infant baptism. . . must guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ" (§16).

149. The text rightly emphasizes that baptism and faith belong together, but that faith is not limited to a particular point in time since it is a life-long growth in Christ and a continuing struggle as also a continuing experience of grace (§9). Similarly we welcome the fact that in baptism the fellowship in the faith, into which even children can also be admitted, is testified.

150. As many members of our congregations are no longer consciously aware of the close connection between faith and baptism we shall have to

take all indications of this particularly seriously. This applies to:

- the celebration of baptism within the framework of the Christian community (§12);
- the attitude of responsibility towards Christian nurture and instruction (§§12 and 16, commentary);
- the eliciting of a conscious confession of the gift of baptism (§12);
- the fulfilling of the declared expectations, in order to avoid "indiscriminate baptism" (§§16 and 21 commentary (b));
- the possibility of making the baptism of young people and adults a more conscious process.

c) Although we recognize the necessity of seeing faith as an event taking place in the community of the church, we nevertheless hesitate to speak of "corporate faith" (§12 commentary) or of the possibility that the confession of faith should be made "by the church" at baptism (§15). The renunciation of sin can also, according to our view, only be declared by the baptized person himself—and therefore only at adult baptism.

#### *4. The baptism of infants and the baptism of believers*

"The possibility that infant baptism was also practised in the apostolic age cannot be excluded. Baptism upon personal profession of faith, however, is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents. In the course of history, the practice of baptism has developed in a variety of forms" (§11). "All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ's faithfulness unto death" (§12). "The differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognized that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community. . . In some churches which unite both infant-baptist and believer-baptist traditions it has been possible to regard two equivalent alternatives for entry into the Church" (§12, commentary). "Baptism is an unrepeatable act" (§13).

151. We are glad that both forms of baptism are named, as equivalent alternatives, even though baptism following a personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested practice in the New Testament documents (§11). We agree that all baptism is rooted in and witnesses to Christ's faithfulness unto death (§12) and that the personal faith of the recipient of baptism together with steadfast participation in the life of the church are essential for the fruit of baptism to be fully received (§12, commentary) We likewise maintain that baptism is unrepeatable.

152. We accept both the challenge to a responsible approach towards Christian nurture, which by its nature never reaches completion, and the emphasis on the necessity for a later personal confession of faith, as a reflection on our practice to date (cf. 3 (b) above).

153. We consider it misleading when the impression is given (§13 commentary) that in many free churches rebaptism before reception into full membership is no longer practised today. A different wording

should be sought on this point for the sake of ecumenical veracity and respect for the opinion of these churches—which is not one shared by us.

#### *5. Baptism and the community*

"Through baptism Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the church of every time and place" (§6). (Baptism) "has its setting in the life and faith of the Church. . . At every baptism the whole congregation reaffirms its faith in God. . . Baptism should therefore always be celebrated and developed in the setting of the Christian community"

## 74 *Churches respond to BEM*

(§12). "Since baptism is intimately connected with the corporate life and worship of the Church, it should normally be administered during public worship" (§23).

154. We are glad that the text strongly emphasizes that baptism brings incorporation into the body of Christ (§6) and that baptism takes place in the church as the community of faith (§12).

155. We recognize here a challenge to alter our own practice so that baptism shall be celebrated as a rule within the framework of the church service (§§12 and 23). We see this as the most meaningful way of reminding the congregation of its own baptism and of its responsibility for the baptized. In addition, the custom of baptism commemoration should be rediscovered in our church, perhaps within the framework of the celebration of Easter Eve.

156. Since baptism is valid and brought into operation once and for all, we consider the statement "Baptism needs to be constantly reaffirmed" (§14 (c) commentary) to be misleading.

### 6. *Baptism and the unity of the church*

"Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is . . . a basic bond of unity. . . Therefore our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship" (§6). The need to recover baptismal unity is at the heart of the ecumenical task" (§6 Commentary).

157. We welcome the affirmation that baptism unites the baptized with Christ and with his people (§2) and that baptism is a basic bond of unity (§6).

158. We take the "call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship" (§6) as a call to us also and recognize the necessity to recover the unity given in baptism.

159. The relationship between God's people (§1) and Christ's people (§2) requires further clarification in view of our relationship to the people of Israel.

### 7. *The significance of word and symbol in the celebration of baptism*

"Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures. . . " (§20). "It is appropriate to explain in the context of the baptismal service the meaning of baptism as it appears from scriptures" (§21). "In the celebration of baptism the symbolic dimension of water should be taken seriously and not minimized" (§18). "As was the case in the early centuries, the gift of the Spirit in baptism may be signified in additional ways; for example, by the sign of the laying on of hands and by anointing or chrismation. . . The very sign of the cross recalls the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. . ." (§19).

a) We agree that the proclamation of the scriptures (in particular the exhortation to baptize) should be named first among the elements of the

order of baptism, but we consider it not only appropriate but also absolutely necessary to explain (within the context of the baptismal service) the meaning of baptism as it appears in the scriptures (§21). We also welcome the statement that the symbolic dimension of water should be taken seriously (§18) and therefore consider a baptism without the use of water as not being in accordance with the institution and thus not acceptable (§21, commentary). Finally, we also consider the sign of the cross and laying on of hands as useful means of clarifying the baptismal act.

160. The form of total immersion practised by other churches raises legitimate questions for our baptismal practice, in which the marked "break" that baptism originally made in the life of the baptized no longer makes itself felt. For practical reasons, however, we see no way of introducing this practice into our church at the moment. The point about misunderstandings in connection with baptism (§21 commentary) will receive our attention.
161. We cannot agree to the interpretation that the continuity between the old and the new creation is revealed in the use of water. Baptism means exactly the opposite according to New Testament understanding; discontinuity between the previous life and the new life of the Christian (cf. Rom. 6). Any symbolism which is not founded on scripture, or is even contrary to it, is to be rejected (§18 commentary). Similarly we question whether the anointing with oil which frequently accompanies baptism does not lead to an accumulation of symbols obscuring rather than illuminating the real meaning of baptism. We should content ourselves with the overall accepted statement that "baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit" (§14).

#### **Eucharist**

The Lord's supper — we choose this expression throughout our response— has been seen predominantly in the theology of the Reformation under the aspect of the forgiveness of sins. Even if we wish to retain this point of view as a decisive one, we are thankful for the fact that the Lord's supper is set by the statement in the context of God's work of salvation as a

whole. In general the understanding of the eucharist thereby becomes more differentiated. Our reply is divided into five sections:

- 162. the work of the Triune God;
- 163. word and response;
- 164. community of the faithful (communio);
- 165. creation and eschatology;
- 166. celebration of the Lord's supper.

#### *1. The work of the Triune God*

"The church receives the eucharist as a gift from the Lord (§1). God makes this gift to us in Christ" (§2). "It is entirely the gift of God (§26) and he himself is in action. He is 'the primary origin and the final fulfilment of the eucharistic event' " (§14).



"Its living centre is 'the incarnate Son of God by and in whom it is accomplished' (§14). Christ's sacrifice is 'accomplished once and for all on the cross' (§5). Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension are unique and cannot be repeated" (§8).

"It is Christ who in the eucharist gathers, teaches and nourishes the church. Christ presides at the supper. The eucharist is neither creation nor possession of the assembly, but is always received as a gift."

"The Holy Spirit as the power of love makes this event possible" (§14). "The whole action depends upon his work" (§16). "He makes the presence of the crucified and risen Christ reality and fulfils the promise contained in the words of institution" (§14).

"It is the church which receives the eucharist" (§1). "It speaks the great sacrifice of praise on behalf of the whole creation" (§4). "Christ acts through the joyful celebration of his church" (§7). "It is united with the Son. She brings thanksgiving and intercession in communion with him" (§8).

167. The comprehensive Trinitarian approach determines the presentation of the eucharist. This approach at the same time emphasizes God acting in Christ as giver in a special way. The text opens with the Christology. The gift of the Lord's supper is the fruit of the once-for-all life, death and resurrection of Christ, this being unrepeatable. The presence of Christ as an event made possible by the Holy Spirit comes particularly to the fore in the reception of the tradition of the *epiklesis*. The response of the celebrating congregation is also the work of the Holy Spirit.

168. The Trinitarian approach is not completely new to our theological tradition, but unusual. It causes us to reflect more deeply on the connection between the eucharist and the whole of God's work of salvation. It is the Creator also who gives us the gift of the Lord's supper and who is faithful through his work of salvation in the covenant with Israel. It is he who enables us to experience in the coming of Christ the dawning of his kingdom and who in his Spirit is the power of the true life.

169. In this area, however, the text also raises questions for us. The relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and the action of the

church is not made sufficiently clear. In some sentences, too much weight is given to the church as subject of the action. The work of the Holy Spirit and the action of the church must not simply be described as identical. Is a balance maintained in the statements on acts of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? In the same way, while accepting the concept of the "body of Christ", it is necessary for the distinction between Christ as the head and the church as the "members" to be preserved.

## 2. *Word and response*

"Fundamental to the celebration is the promise contained in the words of institution" (§13). "The words and acts of Christ stand at the heart of the celebration" (§13). "The meals which Jesus shared during his earthly minis-

try 'proclaim and enact the nearness of the Kingdom'" (§1). "The anamnesis is 'the memorial of all that God has done for the salvation of the world'" (§8). "It is not only a calling to mind of what is past, but is the church's effective proclamation of God's mighty acts and promises" (§7). "Through the anamnesis the preached word and eucharistic meal reinforce each other. The celebration of eucharist properly includes the proclamation of the word" (§12). "The eucharist is a proclamation and celebration of the work of God" (§3). " 'In accordance with Christ's promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins'" (§2). "Christians see the eucharist prefigured in the Passover. . . meal" (§1).

"The eucharist is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification" (§3), "the great sacrifice of praise by which the church speaks on behalf of the whole creation" (§4). "This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him" (§4).

"The celebration of the eucharist is the central act of the church's worship" (§1).

a) In agreement with the evangelical understanding, the text begins with the words of institution. They are words of promise through which the pledge of forgiveness of sins is received. These words are associated with the preaching of Jesus on earth and connected with the Passover supper.

Preaching of the word and supper belong together. The text avoids any independence of the elements. The real presence refers to the complete celebration of word and supper. Through the reception of the *anamnesis* the biblical context of the work of salvation in the Lord's supper is emphasized. The supper is a part of the whole event of worship. It is connected with the proclaimed word and is the central act of the church's worship. Since the Lord's supper is the thanksgiving and sacrifice of praise of the celebrating congregation, it is also rightly named the eucharist.

b) The texts challenge us to examine whether the tradition following the Reformation has not too exclusively emphasized the death of Christ. Is it not a narrowing down to see the meaning of the Lord's supper almost exclusively in the forgiveness of sins?

The New Testament sees Jesus' last supper in the context of the Passover tradition and the meal of the covenant on Mount Sinai as a meal of deliverance and as a meal of God's faithfulness to the covenant. It also sets it against the background of Jesus' eating with publicans and sinners and with his proclamation of the dawning of God's kingdom. It is also the meal that the risen Lord celebrates with his disciples, and during which they recognize him. We welcome the fact that the statement calls attention to these associations.

The *anamnesis* as part of the liturgy has to a great extent remained alien to our tradition. If we reaccept it together with the document, it can thus make

78 *Churches respond to BEM*

it clear that the words of institution are not "representatio" through the mere recitation, i.e. that, as with the thought-structures of the Old Testament, not only remembering but also effective proclamation and presentation.

In some evangelical congregations the Lord's supper is not yet viewed as part of the whole service of worship, but as a special service or supplement. Here, the document takes us further along a path which we have only begun to tread.

Has the character of the Lord's supper as a celebration been neglected in the churches of the Reformation? What role do praise and thanksgiving play in our communion service? The terms "sacrifice" and "representation" do not necessarily have a cultic meaning. If we interpret them as a sacrifice of praise and obedient acceptance of the gift of God, together with which we offer ourselves, they signalize the appropriate response of the congregation.

This is all the more true because the invocation of the Spirit (*epiklesis*) upon the congregation means that the Spirit of God renders us able and ready to recognize Christ's offering of himself for us and to accept it with thankfulness.

c) Throughout the text, "eucharist" is the term generally employed. Though we welcome the stress laid upon the eucharistic idea, we consider the exclusive use of the term as questionable, and "Lord's supper" as the better one, including as it does the other names. Does not the church become too much the centre of things as the "actor" when the word "eucharist" is predominantly used? It must be maintained without possible misunderstanding that it is unconditionally the Triune God who is the actor, and that Christ must not unintentionally become the object of the church as actor. In this connection we should prefer the definition "congregation" to the term "church" at some points.

If in the tradition of the Reformers the celebration aspect of the Lord's supper has until recently taken second place to that of forgiveness of sins, the opposite tendency seems to obtain in the text before us. Without relegating the other points of view to the background we are nevertheless of the opinion that the aspect of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God requires especial emphasis.

In our church of the Rhineland a resolution has been passed entitled "renewal of the relationship between Christians and Jews". In the light of this new approach to understanding, further elucidation of the relationship between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Lord's supper is important to us.

The significance of word and spirit for the event of the Lord's supper needs further clarification: What is the relationship between the words of institution (*promissio*) and the *epiklesis*? Is there not a stronger emphasis on the *epiklesis* than on the words of institution? Is the presence of the Spirit dependent on the *epiklesis*? In our opinion the *epiklesis* should not receive a

causal character. Where the *promissio* of the words of institution is spoken the response of the congregation can still only be one of thankfulness. For this reason we would reword §14. . . "the church thanks the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, since the eucharistic event becomes reality". Any impression that, as a result of emphasizing the *epiklesis*, the gift already made in the words of institution is again made dependent on human action must be avoided.

We cannot agree to the understanding of the *epiklesis* as consecrating the elements in the sense of a doctrine of transubstantiation. The signs given with the words of institution are not signs for the absent but for the present Christ. They are effective as such and need no consecration to make them effectual.

The Lima document indicates that it has not yet been possible to clarify the presence of Christ in the elements. We should like to suggest further reflection on this point. The Leuenberg Agreement (paragraphs 18-19) can be referred to in this connection.

Doubts concerning the *anamnesis* arise where this is linked to the concept of sacrifice and not clearly understood as an actualizing proclamation. The idea of cultic sacrifice in connection with the Lord's supper is a post-New Testament one. The train of thought: "sacrifice — atonement — mediation" should not be examined in the light of the Letter to the Hebrews and put into words. Where the term "sacrifice" is to be employed with reference to the action of the congregation, it must be clearly defined as sacrifice of praise and obedient acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ. This is equally true of the relation between thanksgiving and presentation. We must avoid a use of language which equates the church's action with God's action at the event of the Lord's supper.

The fact that the Lord's supper is at the centre of worship is acknowledged in the Evangelical tradition but not always adequately expressed in words. We are in complete agreement with this finding and the consequent critical questioning of our own tradition. We cannot, however, consent to the description of the Lord's supper as the central act of divine worship. In our opinion the proclaimed word of God at divine worship is also of central importance. The statement that the eucharist "includes" the proclaimed word of God does not as far as we are concerned take sufficient account of the latter. In worship, preaching and sacrament are coordinated one with the other.

### 3. *Community of the faithful (communio)*

"In the eating and drinking of the bread and wine Christ grants communion with himself. Christ unites the faithful with himself (§4). "The eucharistic communion with the present Christ is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the church" (§19). "The sharing in one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the

oneness of the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places" (§19).

"The eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses" (§26). "Through union with Christ the faithful are transfigured" (§4). "United to the Lord. . . we are renewed in the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ" (§11).

"The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. All kinds of injustice. . . are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ" (§20). "The manifestations of love in the eucharist are directly related to Christ's own testimony as a servant, in whose servanthood Christians themselves participate" (§21). "Christians are called to be in solidarity with the outcast" (§24).

"It is in the eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested. The sharing of bread and wine effects the unity with all sharers at all times and in all places. Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole church, and the whole church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration" (§19). "As participants in the eucharist we prove ourselves unworthy if we are not actively participating in the ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition" (§20).

a) It is Christ himself who grants communion with himself in the Lord's supper. The fellowship which becomes visible in the sacrament is granted by him and is not established by human effort. In this fellowship he unites the believers with one another. He transforms them and renders them able to bring themselves as offering in their lives and to be his witnesses in word and deed.

Christ is not only the servant of the faithful but he wishes to invite all for whom he died to his feast. The celebration of the Lord's supper has also a missionary and ethical dimension. The partakers in the meal are equipped by this food to be apostles in the world. Since Christ has established fellowship they are bound to be in unity with one another, so as not to weaken their witness. We find it beneficial that "the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions" is here openly alluded to.

The missionary assignment includes witnesses against all injustice, solidarity with the outcast and service of reconciliation. This corresponds to the servanthood of Jesus during his earthly life and with that of the risen Christ who invites to his supper.

b) The communion which Christ grants in his supper transforms the faithful. The aspect of sanctification in the event of the Lord's supper is impressively underlined. The conception of the invocation of the Spirit upon the congregation (*epiklesis*) proves particularly helpful here. Sanctification is in the same way as justification first of all an act of Christ towards us.

Here is an important query for the theology of the Reformation. For good reasons it was at pains to distinguish clearly between justification and sanctification. But has not all too often a separation resulted which is not in accordance with biblical statements (e.g. Rom. 12)? The possibility of understanding sanctification as the work of Christ should be gratefully welcomed by us. In this connection the concept of sacrifice could also be used (§10).

Those who are sanctified through the Lord's supper are given clear pointers to the ethical consequences of the supper. These are not only to be found in the sphere of the individual but also have their social components. Traditional Protestant thinking has narrowed down the meaning of the Lord's supper severely to assurance of salvation for the individual. In contrast to this the texts underline the diaconal and missionary side. The supper of reconciliation includes the commission to make known the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5).

c) We wonder nevertheless whether a sufficient distinction is made between sanctification through Christ and human action. Is the mercy of God already made manifest through human advocacy for justice and peace? The expression "restoration of the world" seems questionable, because it could lead to the supposition that through human activities in the political sphere a world may be established which has no further need of God's redemption. Are partakers of the Lord's supper "unworthy" (German translation) if they do not sufficiently participate in these activities? The choice of expression in the English text: "inconsistent", meaning "incompatible with" (German *unvereinbar*) should be retained here, in any case on account of the traditional misunderstandings of the term "unworthy" (§20).

We have some doubt about the description of the church in this connection. Can one say that she finds her full "manifestation" in the Lord's supper? Must not a distinction be made once again, when we speak of service with Christ, between the empiric church and the *communio sanctorum*? Can a church in her empirical form claim to be the whole church? How far can the church in her magnitude unlimited by time and space also be included in the "manifestation"?

It must be clearly understood that with the expression "mutual forgiveness of sins" (§21) we mean nothing other than mutual forgiveness following the forgiveness already accomplished by God.

#### 4. Creation and eschatology

"The meals which Jesus shared in his earthly ministry proclaim and enact the nearness of the kingdom. . . The eucharist continues these meals always as a sign of the kingdom. . . It is the anticipation of the supper of the Lamb" (§1). "It is representation and anticipation" (§7), "the foretaste of the 'parousia' of Christ and of the final kingdom" (§6). "In the sacrifice of

praise, fruits of the earth and of human labour are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist signifies what the world is to become" (§4). "The world to which renewal is promised is present in the eucharistic celebration in thanksgiving, memorial and intercession" (§23). "In the eucharist the Holy Spirit gives a foretaste of the kingdom of God, life of the new creation and assurance of the Lord's return" (§18). "The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation and is a foretaste of it. . . The church joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the kingdom in Christ" (§22).

a) As the Lord's supper is the representation of the saving work of God in the covenant with Israel and in the life and death of Jesus, so it is also the sign of the kingdom and a foretaste of his return. The text impressively underlines the aspect of the future. This corresponds with Old Testament thinking which always associates the representation of the events of salvation with the eschatological prospect. Similarly Jesus sees his preaching in association with the eschatological feast.

Creation is also to be renewed with the coming of the kingdom of God. As Christ associates his presence with the signs of bread and wine which are elements of creation, so the whole of creation is included in the event of the Lord's supper.

b) The eschatological aspect of the Lord's supper has received increasingly more weight in our church since the Arnoldshain theses. However, this has not as yet exercised sufficient influence on our practice of celebration. For this reason we welcome the strong emphasis of this aspect in the statement.

We are equally pleased with the comprehensiveness which the understanding of the Lord's supper acquires when the cosmological horizon is taken into consideration.

c) We are doubtful as to whether the contrast or "tension" between the "already" and the "not yet" is maintained throughout, or whether it is not rather resolved in favour of "present" eschatology. The way in which the world is "present" in the eucharistic celebration (§23) ought also in our opinion to be more exactly described.

##### 5. *The celebration of the Lord's supper*

"In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it" (§29). "Faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord's supper" (§30). "It is therefore appropriate that it should be celebrated at least every Sunday" (§31).

"There is discussion in many churches today about the inclusion of baptized children as communicants" (§19, commentary).

"The eucharistic liturgy is essentially a single whole, consisting historically of elements in varying sequence and of diverse importance" (§27). "The

affirmation of a common eucharistic faith does not imply uniformity in either liturgy or practice. A certain liturgical diversity is recognized as an enriching fact" (§28).

"In most churches the presidency is signified by an ordained minister. . . . He is the ambassador who represents the divine initiative" (§29).

170. The significance of the Lord's supper for the life of the church and for the faith of the individual Christian should also find expression in the frequency with which the celebration takes place. There is a process of growing agreement here which can lead to unity in the celebration of the Lord's supper. Liturgical diversity is no obstruction on the way, but is recognized as "enriching" (§33).

171. Has the Lord's supper already the place in our practice of worship which it ought to occupy having regard to our theological knowledge? We believe that our church still has something to learn in this respect. We should also be open to a greater diversity of liturgical possibilities. The question of the participation of baptized children in the Lord's supper has for some time also been put to our congregations and has already been approved in preliminary resolutions passed by the general synod. We should question ourselves, however, whether we are supporting this aim decisively enough and whether our effort to include children in the fellowship of the meal should not be given even more weight.

With reference to the question of the reservation of the elements, we encounter differing interpretations with regard to the continuing presence of Christ in the elements. Here the church is called upon to express mutual respect also in connection with the practice of reserving the elements.

Finally our congregations must ask themselves how far they treat the unconsumed bread and wine appropriately after the celebration of the meal.

c) The itemizing of the individual elements of the liturgy seems to us to be open to criticism. What are the criteria for their choice and order of arrangement? Does history, or more bluntly tradition, legitimate the choice? We have already pointed to the problematic of the *epiklesis* and the elements (ref. 2(c)).

The fact that unity does not as yet exist as to the significance of the words of institution finds its expression in the different interpretations of the

continuing presence of Christ in the consecrated elements and the resulting diversity of practice in reserving them. We are struck by the fact that there is no mention of faith in this context.

The importance of ordained ministers to preside at the celebration will be dealt with in the section concerning ministry.

### **Ministry**

The section concerning "ministry" is the longest in the document. This seems to indicate that the subject involves many problems. In spite of the agreement of the churches as to the necessity of the ministry, the inter-

pretations of its essence and significance as well as the practical order of ministry are extraordinarily diverse.

In view of these factors it was declared in Lausanne in 1927 that the episcopal, presbyteral and congregational elements must find their place in the order of the church. Accordingly it should be the task of a convergence statement to examine what these three forms of constitution share with each other.

In the text before us we find that this task has received only very limited attention. The impression conveyed is rather that the episcopal constitution is the point of departure and goal of the deliberations.

This impression is strengthened by the observations that on several occasions the correct exegetic findings given in the commentaries are abandoned or passed over in the main sections in favour of the normative force of the episcopal tradition.

In spite of these objections of principle we should like to take a positive attitude to the text, especially since the fundamental significance of the "calling of the whole people of God" is recognized in the first section. At the same time we interpret the text in the light of biblical references quoted, examine it critically and examine ourselves critically in the light of it. This is done in the following sections:

- 172. Christ and ministry;
- 173. the community and ministry;
- 174. ministry and office;
- 175. the Spirit and ministry;
- 176. ways to mutual recognition.

#### *1. Christ and ministry*

"Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are the foundation of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the gospel and the gifts of the sacraments" (§1). "As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry" (§11). "Through Christ, people are enabled to turn in praise to God and in service to their neighbours" (§2). "The church is called to proclaim and prefigure the kingdom of God" (§4).

"The church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ" (§8). "The ministry of such persons. . . is constitutive for the life and witness of the church" (§8).

"The ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community and proclaim his message of reconciliation" (§11). "The presence of the ordained ministers reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity" (§12). "It is especially

in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus «il' (lie deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of **his** body" (§14).

"The authority of the ordained minister is rooted in Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father, and who confers it by the Holy Spirit through [lie act of ordination" (§15). "Christ's authority is unique" (§16). "The authority of Christ is an authority governed by love for the 'sheep who have no shepherd'" (Matt. 9:36).

"Authority in the church can only be authentic as it seeks to conform to ilis model" (§16). "Because Jesus came as one who serves, to be set apart means to be consecrated to service" (§15). "It is the risen Lord who is the I rue ordainer" (§39).

a) All offices in the church are commissioned and authorized by the crucified and risen Lord. Christ himself is the ordainer. He enables people to witness through the Holy Spirit, chooses them and calls them. This does not of course mean that all the specific forms of ministry which have developed in the churches in the course of history are directly to be traced back to the institution by Christ, but it does mean that an exercise of ministry in the church must suffer comparison with his example of service. His authority is unique. It is an authority of love and of service. The way in which he proclaimed and lived the gospel contains at one and the same time the authentic description of the content of the commission received by all members of the church in office.

We agree with the statement that it is necessary for the service of the church that she should continually be reminded of her fundamental dependence on Christ and thus receive a focal point for her unity.

177. This task of the ministry in relation to the life and work of the church as well as its significance for church unity — including its critical function — are not always seen clearly enough in our church.

178. In this connection, however, major reservations arise as far as we are concerned. Ministries are of course necessary in order to fulfill the church's commission and it is reasonable that persons should be ordained for them. Nevertheless, only word and sacrament are the foundation of the church. For us the focus of unity is neither ministry nor minister, but only what Christ bestows on us through their proclamation. Thus the making present (representation) and realization of Christ occurs in the exercise of the ministry. But the holders of office do not become Christ's representatives.

We cannot agree to any independent status for the ministry vis-a-vis word and sacrament.

2. *The community and ministry*

"In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become **his** people" (§1).



"The church is called to proclaim and prefigure the kingdom of God. It accomplishes this by announcing the gospel to the world and by its very existence as the body of Christ" (§4).

"The churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God" (§6). "All members of the church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope" (§4).

"All members are called to offer their being 'as a living sacrifice' and to intercede for the church and the salvation of the world. Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ and to the priesthood of the church" (§17). "The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world" (§5).

"Jesus called the Twelve to be representatives of the renewed Israel. At that moment they represent the whole people of God and at the same time exercise a special role in the midst of that community. It can be said that the apostles prefigure both the church as a whole and the persons within it who are entrusted with the specific authority and responsibility" (§10). "On the one hand the community needs ordained ministers. On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfil their calling only in and for the community. They have need of the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community" (§12).

"Authority has the character of responsibility before God and is exercised with the cooperation of the whole community" (§15).

". . . Ordained ministers must not be autocrats or impersonal functionaries. . . they are bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity. Only when they seek the response and acknowledgment of the community can their authority be protected from the distortions of isolation and domination" (§16).

"The ordination takes place within a community which accords public recognition to a particular person" (§15).

"Properly speaking ordination denotes an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation" (§40).

"By placing ordination in the context of worship and especially of the eucharist the understanding of ordination is preserved as an act of the whole community and not of a certain order within it or of the individual ordained" (§41).

a) In order to overcome their differences the church must take as starting-point the calling of the whole people of God. This calling presupposes the abiding election of Israel. All members are called to bring themselves as a "living sacrifice". The church's commission, to which the ministry is to contribute, is conferred on the whole people of God.

b) This presentation of the biblical view meets with our agreement. We try to do justice to this image in our church by means of a presbyterial-synodal order. We certainly ask ourselves also whether the prominence given to ministers in our church is not conducive to a structure at variance with that image.

We see that in other churches solidarity as God's people and the body of Christ plays a much stronger role than in the evangelical tradition. We feel challenged by the biblical pattern to ecumenical dialogue.

c) In the text before us we do not consider that this correct biblical approach is adhered to. A number of details make this clear. There is no mention of responsibility of the congregation for the proclamation. While the congregation recognizes, supports and encourages the ministers, it has no critical role vis-a-vis the ministry. The ordained ministry is seen as the point of reference between Christ and the members of his body, and therefore has a mediatory function. Collegiality exists only within the college of the ordained. Synodal meetings only receive marginal mention. Leadership at the celebration of the Lord's supper and the leadership in the parish are so bound up in each other that they are reserved for the ordained. At some points in the text "church" and "communities" are contrasted. The term "Gemeinde" (= parish or congregation) is not used, so that the church appears in the role of an "administering" church. Those aspects of the Presbyterian and Congregational church constitution which were stressed in Lausanne 1927 and which have an established tradition in our church are omitted in this presentation. Equally so the office of the "elder" (see Article 1, Emden 1571; cf. also "Barmen IV", 1934). Accordingly the term "presbyter" is used only to denote ordained persons.

### 3. *Ministry and office*

"The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts" (§5). "All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received" (§5). "The ordained ministry, which is itself a charism, must not become a hindrance for the variety of these charisms" (§32). "Christ's mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts. In order to fulfill this mission faithfully, they will seek relevant forms of witness and service in each situation" (§4).

"The very existence of the Twelve and other apostles shows that, from the beginning, there were differentiated roles in the community" (§9).

"The role of the apostles as witnesses to the resurrection of Christ is unique and unrepeatable. There is therefore a difference between the apostles and the ordained ministers whose ministries are founded on theirs" (§10).

"The word 'charism' denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ. . . The word 'ministry' in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called. The term 'ordained ministry' refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the spirit and the laying on of hands" (§7).

"The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and to build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry" (§13). "These tasks are not exercised by the ordained ministry in an exclusive way. . . Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfils these functions in a representative way" (§13 commentary).

"The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the church" . . . "During the second and third centuries a threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained ministry throughout the church" (§19). "The bishop was the leader of the community" (§20). "He was ordained and installed to proclaim the word and preside over the celebration of the eucharist. He was surrounded by a college of presbyters and deacons. . . In this context the bishop's ministry was a focus of unity within the whole community" (§20).

"The New Testament never uses the term 'priesthood' or 'priest' to designate the ordained ministry or the ordained minister. . . This term is reserved, on the one hand, for the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ and, on the other hand, for the royal and prophetic priesthood of all baptized. In the early church these terms gradually came to be used to designate the ordained ministry and minister as presiding at the eucharist" (§17 commentary).

"Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek. . ." (§22). " . . . the churches need people who in different ways express and perform the tasks of the ordained ministry in its diaconal, presbyterial and episcopal aspects and functions" (§22). "The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the gospel. . . collegial, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers. . . the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community. . ." (§26).

"The ordained ministry needs to be constitutionally or canonically ordered and exercised in the church in such a way that each of these three dimensions can find adequate expression" (§27).

"The church is called to convey to the world the image of a new humanity. There is in Christ no male or female. The church must discover (the ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men" (§18).

179. The New Testament does not describe a uniform structure of ministry.

The forms of ministry are manifold. This corresponds to the manifold gifts

bestowed on the community by the Spirit. The ministry is itself a charism,

and it is important that this should not be a hindrance to the variety of gifts.

Each charism serves in gathering and building up of the body of Christ. The

structure of ministry which has partly developed over the years in the

churches is in need of a reform in order to give better expression to the

threefold ministry and thus to the variety of gifts. It is also a part of this

reform to discover the contribution that can be made by women to the

service of Christ.

180. We express our agreement with these sentences which are based on New Testament statements. We wonder whether in our church the position

of the ordained preacher has not acquired such a monopoly status as to

hinder the variety of gifts. We think it is necessary to consider whether

ordination should not also take place for other offices in the sphere of

leadership and diakonia. New forms of ministry would thus arise. The

discussion of the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon could

be the starting-point for a new pattern of ministries.

We see no biblical foundation for the exclusion of women from ordination. Hence women can be ordained in our church. We realize however that women are not yet sufficiently represented in leading ecclesiastical offices.

c) Unfortunately we cannot find any follow-up along these lines in the text under consideration. From the "variety of forms of ministry" the text moves on abruptly to the ordained ministry, which is an historical growth. From this point onwards there is mention only of the latter.

The function of presiding at the Lord's supper is stressed as the first and foremost duty, thereby narrowing the concept of ministry to that of the priesthood, although it is rightly stated that the New Testament does not employ this designation for the ordained ministry. The threefold structure of ministry is in reality described as a hierarchy. Bishops, presbyters and deacons do not stand beside one another in office, but are subordinate to each other. In the office of bishop all duties and powers come together. It is the real office of the church.

As far as the ordination of women is concerned no conclusions are drawn from the exegesis of Galatians 3:28, but the different interpretations are merely listed.

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## 4. The Spirit and ministry

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"The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world" (§1). "The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Spirit keeps the church in the truth and guides it despite the frailty of its members" (§3).

"The Spirit is the giver of diverse gifts which enrich the life of the community. In order to enhance their effectiveness, the community will recognize publicly certain of these charisms" (§32).

"In ordaining, the church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of the gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit" (§39).

"The act of ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at one and the same time invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*): sacramental sign; acknowledgment of gifts and commitment" (§41).

"Although the outcome of the church's *epiklesis* depends upon the freedom of God, the church ordains in confidence that God, being faithful to his promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into contingent, historical forms of human relationships and uses them for his purpose. Ordination is a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship signified is present in, with and through the words spoken, the gestures made and the forms employed" (§43(b)).

"Since ordination is essentially a setting apart with prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person" (§15). "In recognition of the God-given charism of ministry, ordination to any one of the particular ordained ministries is never repeated" (§48).

"The Spirit keeps the church in the apostolic tradition until the fulfilment of history in the kingdom of God. Apostolic tradition in the church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the church of the apostles" (§34).

"Within this apostolic tradition is an apostolic succession of the ministry which serves the continuity of the church in its life in Christ and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. . . A distinction should be made between the apostolic tradition of the whole church and the succession of the apostolic ministry" (§34, commentary).

"The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, of the continuity of Christ's own mission in which the church participates. Within the church the ordained ministry has a particular task of preserving and actualizing the apostolic faith. The orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is therefore a powerful expression of the continuity of the church throughout history" (§35). "The sign of apostolic succession thus not only

points to historical continuity; it also manifests an actual spiritual reality" (§36, commentary).

a) The Holy Spirit calls and sanctifies people and bestows on them diverse gifts so that they may bear witness to the gospel and serve one another. He holds the church in the way of truth by keeping her in the continuity of the apostolic proclamation of the gospel. This apostolic iridution of the church as a whole differs from the episcopal succession — see §§34 and 35. It is also to be found in churches which have not retained the episcopal succession.

Ordination takes the form of invocation of the Spirit in confidence that God is faithful in his promise. In §40 ordination is fittingly described as the action of God and the community.

b) We welcome the emphasis laid upon the epikletic character of the ordination, as this does not always become sufficiently clear in the practice of our church.

We welcome the invitation to interpret the apostolic tradition primarily as the continuity of the proclamation in word and sacrament and in the ministry of love. In this connection episcopal succession could be understood as constituent part and expression of the apostolicity of the church as a whole, if it is regarded as a sign but not as guarantee of continuity and unity (§38).

c) For this reason we do not see why the unity of the church is best furthered by acceptance of the episcopal succession. In the commentary to §39, ordination by the bishop is given special preference. This strong emphasis on the office of the bishop leads us to ask whether the episcopal succession is not given a greater measure of importance than is described in §§35 and 36. We cannot, however, agree to the interpretation that the apostolic tradition is safeguarded by the episcopal succession.

In the description of ordination we have doubts about the use of the term "sacramental sign" in so far as it could be taken as expressing the *charakter indelebilis*. Likewise, the laying on of hands is not for us a "gift of the Spirit", but a sign for the promise of the Spirit. The Spirit blows where it wills, and no other certainty than that of the faith, which trusts the promise, is granted to us.

## 5. Towards mutual recognition

"All churches need to examine the forms of ordained ministry and the degree to which the churches are faithful to its original intentions" (§51). "Churches can recognize their respective ordained ministries if they are mutually assured of their intention to transmit the ministry of word and sacrament in continuity with apostolic times. The act of transmission should be performed in accordance with the apostolic tradition, which includes the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands" (§52). "Churches which have preserved the episcopal succession are asked to recognize. . . the

apostolic content of the ordained ministry which exists in churches which have not maintained such succession. . ." (§53(a)). "Churches without the episcopal succession. . . are asked to realize that the continuity with the church of the apostles finds profound expression in the successive laying on of hands by bishops" (§53(b)).

181. We agree that all churches must examine their forms of ordained ministry with a view to mutual recognition.

182. In the previous paragraphs we have indicated, in each case under (b), the direction in which this examination should take place in our church: recognition of the critical function of ministry, understanding of the succession as sign of continuity, surmounting of the monopoly position of the ordained preacher.

183. We note the absence of any indication that the episcopal succession must similarly be re-examined and cannot be accepted without question. In §53(b), it is not clear whether with recognition of episcopal succession an acceptance of a sacramental bishop's consecration is also required, such as is practised in the Catholic and Orthodox churches. We should not consent to this.

#### **Concluding remarks**

The first three questions put by the World Council of Churches are answered by this response.

In answer to the fourth question the synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland gives its assent first of all to the points of view expressed by the EKD (Evangelical Church in Germany — EKD Text No. 7, p.19) with the following wording:

1. We request the Commission on Faith and Order, after receipt of the requested responses, to transmit to the churches a survey indicating:

184. the views on which there are signs of a possible consensus;

185. the points indicated in the text as the subject of conflicting views on

where there are now signs of further convergence;

186. the points on which there is obviously no agreement together with the conflicting views or motives.

187. The Commission should for its part submit proposals as to how still existing divergences on the way to church fellowship can be overcome. It

seems to us to be important that the aim of mutual recognition and the continually increasing communion of the churches should not be lost sight of.

188. The convergence texts on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry"

them

selves have repeatedly made us aware that they need a fundamental text on

the common faith in which the churches are rooted. We should therefore

like to encourage the Commission to lay stress on the undertaking of the

new study project concerning a "common expression of the apostolic faith

today" and to allow for the participation of the churches. In this connection

there is also a need to determine on what basis testimonies of the faith in answer to concrete challenges can be so formulated as not to endanger the unity of the faith of the church as a whole (*status confessionis* and ethical heresy); and adds to the above:

4. We feel encouraged by the convergence statements to put their intentions before our congregations and to continue the dialogue.

Resolution 52/Gen. Synod 85

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189. The Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck is called to the service of the gospel of Jesus Christ, given by the message of holy scripture and testified by the confession of the Reformation.

190. It supports the fellowship of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the ecumenical fellowship of the churches in the world.

191. It is characterized above all by the Augsburg Confession and the symbols of the ancient church incorporated in that Confession; within the diversity of the traditional confessions of the Reformation it has grown together to *one* church.

192. In this unity which has developed historically and in the realization of the common ministry, this church, with all its congregations and all its members, has the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel aright in word and sacrament, in counselling, teaching, mission and diakonia.

recognize significant aspects of this basis of

On 17 April 1985, during its session in Hofgeismar/Germany, the synod of the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldck debated the declarations of convergence with the title "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" issued by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. The synod regards these texts, which have been formulated over decades, as a significant impulse in the ecumenical discussion between churches of extremely varying traditions and characters. Therefore the synod expresses its gratitude to all those active in drawing up the present declarations of convergence as well as to those who have worked on viewpoints and criteria for their treatment during the process of reception. Here we would mention in particular the paper "Gesichtspunkte für Stellungnahmen zu den Konvergenzerklärungen. . . " published by a preparatory committee of the EKD in December 1983 (EKD-Text No. 7, quoted here as "Viewpoints").

The Synod welcomes the intention of assisting the dialogue between the divided churches by way of the convergences identified in these three texts, even though this reveals that the process cannot yet lead to full agreement and retains its preliminary character.

Nonetheless, the synod

our church.

believes that the agreements already reached within the process of reception should not be abandoned again in the future.

Our replies to the four questions posed by the Commission on Faith and Order in the preface to the Lima text are as follows.

**Question 1: To what extent can your church recognize in this text the faith of the church through the ages?**

The Lima text has already achieved considerable significance within our church, since it has caused congregations and various bodies to discuss baptism, eucharist and ministry afresh. The basis of this discussion within our church is the preamble to our basic statutes dated 22 May 1967:

i 1,150,000 members, 4 dioceses, 949 parishes, 680 pastors.

**Question 2: What consequences can your church draw from this text for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith?**

Our church has "grown together to *one* church within the diversity of the traditional confessions of the Reformation". It belongs to the World Council of Churches as a member church of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and arranges its ecumenical relations and dialogues in cooperation with the other member churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany. In this context we adopt the corresponding answer to question 2 from the "Viewpoints" of the EKD (p. 17):

We wish to have closer relations to those churches that also recognize the Lima text as an expression of the apostolic faith. The mutual recognition of the ordained ministries could make a significant contribution towards this aim, whereby we are aware that we have less difficulties on this point than churches of other traditions. The fact

that this recognition is still missing does not prevent us from practising ecumenical hospitality at our communion services, i.e. we do not exclude members of other churches from them. . .

In the Lima text we recognize preliminary studies for discussions leading beyond the stage of "reconciled diversity", which we welcome, towards connections such as already exist within the fellowship of the churches in the sense of the Leuenberg Agreement. In this way, what we already recognizably have in common can be further developed; the mutual recognition of baptism, which is already accepted in most cases, offers a good starting position.

**Question 3: What guidance can your church take from this text for its worship, educational, ethical and spiritual life and witness?**

In response to this question we would refer to the sections "Inquiries put to us" which have been formulated in the "Viewpoints" on baptism, eucharist and ministry respectively (pp. 6f., 9f., 13f.). Beyond that should be mentioned in particular:

*A. On baptism*

193. The theological board of our church has presented a paper "On the Understanding and Practice of Baptism" (Didaskalia 29, Kassel 1984, quoted here as "Paper"). Essential suggestions of the Lima text on baptism are already contained in this paper.
194. The Lima text confirms us in our practice of administering baptism during the Sunday worship of the congregation (§§12,23). However the right to decide this point is reserved for the individual congregations. This is also true of the recommendation of special baptism dates (§23; cf. Paper, V.2.3).
195. The response of the theological board to the Accra text emphasizes: "That baptism fundamentally entitles to participation in communion can be seen in our church, where confirmation candidates can be invited to holy communion, as soon as they have been instructed about its significance". At present we are testing the possibility of allowing children under particular conditions to participate in communion together with their families after the appropriate teaching (cf. commentary of the theological board on the question of children's participation at communion).
196. The Lima text confirms us in renewed exertions for Christian nurture and confirmation (§§12,16).
197. The Lima text also makes the ethical implications of baptism clear and emphasizes its significance for overcoming sexual, racial and social discriminations in the unity of the body of Christ (§§4,6 Commentary). This point of view forces us to comprehend the fact of our baptism more deeply and to take the consequences more seriously.
198. We support the passages in the "Viewpoints" of the EKD on "baptism as a bond of unity with other churches" (p. 7, No. 9): "Because we see baptism as a fundamental bond of unity and because it compels

the churches to overcome their differences (§6), it is for us self-evident to recognize a baptism administered in other churches in the name of the Triune God by pouring on water or by immersion (§15). For us this is independent of the fact whether it was administered upon the confession of faith made by the candidate himself or upon the baptismal commitment made by parents and godparents". We also reject "re-baptism" (§13; cf. Paper, p. 36).

*B. On the eucharist*

1. The Reformation service of holy communion is determined by the theology of the cross; therefore it has to speak of the passion and death of Christ. The Lima text encourages us to express more strongly in our communion celebrations the thanks and praise of the congregation with regard to everything that Christ "has accomplished for us and all creation" (§§3,4,6,8).



2. We accept the warning that in the redeeming power of the gospel the Lord's supper also challenges us to ethically appropriate action (§§20,21,24). To be sure, we must also remark that this occurs in the same way whenever the Word of God is proclaimed.

5. In our church, too, we have begun to celebrate holy communion more frequently and in a richer variety of forms, not least as a result of ecumenical experiences in our church services. The Lima text encourages us to pursue this course.

199. In its understanding of the communion our church sees itself bound to the consensus of a communion fellowship of Lutheran, Reformed and United churches achieved in the Leuenberg Agreement. Therefore we share the questions and reservations of the "Viewpoints" (pp.1 ff.) which essentially refer to the Agreement, of which we are one of the signatories, as the expression of our own communion understanding.

200. Eucharistic hospitality follows out of the communion understanding expressed in §33 and is granted in our church (cf. the reasons given in the report of the theological board on intercommunion). We also acknowledge the resolution of the general synod of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) of 10 October 1975 regarding the "pastoral-theological guidance on the question of the participation of Evangelical-Lutheran and Roman Catholic Christians at eucharist and communion celebrations of the other confession", which has been adopted by the Arnoldshain conference.

201. We approve of a careful treatment of the elements after the communion service (§32). We cannot agree with devotion of the elements amounting to adoration of the host.

### *C. On the ministry*

202. We welcome the fact that the declaration of convergence begins its statement about the ministry with the calling of the whole people of God (§1). Unfortunately this approach is not consistently pursued.

203. We are open to new considerations on the structure of the ministry in the church, where they are evidently called for by the service of the gospel and the real requirements of the church, but we cannot accept the suggested restriction to the threefold ministry (§§19,22). The collegiality of the church ministries is emphasized in several places (§§20,24,26), and we do not confine this simply to the ordained ministers.

204. In connection with commissions issued by the church for particular types of service (assistant pastor, lay preacher) there has arisen among us a new discussion on the question of ordination (§46). Another point is the question whether the consecration of deacons and deaconesses, our normal practice, is to be regarded as a form of ordination within the framework of a pattern of church ministry (§§46,22).

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205. In our church, too, the laying on of hands belongs to ordination (§§39,52).

206. Our church recognizes the service of those churches, in which the question of ministry is organized on the basis of the threefold ministry and the apostolic succession of the bishop. However for theological reasons it does not regard the apostolic succession as necessary for the ministry of its own bishop.

**Question 4: What suggestions can your church make for the ongoing work of Faith and Order as it relates the material of this text on baptism, eucharist and ministry to its long-range research project "Towards the common expression of the apostolic faith today"?**

*A. On baptism*

1. In our opinion there are good reasons in favour of infant baptism as a rule, even though believers' baptism is recognized by us as of equal value. This should be taken into consideration more strongly in the further work of the Commission on Faith and Order (§12 Commentary; cf. on this point also "Paper", pp. 19-43: "Good reasons why the church baptizes infants — theological questions and answers").

207. We request a renewed theological deliberation on the understanding of confirmation. The Lima text takes for granted a sacramental conception which is not shared by our church (§14). In our case confirmation is not understood as the sacramental completion of baptism. It is the conclusion of the Christian nurture based on baptism and expression of the intercession and the pastoral care of the congregation. At the same time confirmation is memorial and reminder of baptism.

208. With regard to a responsible observation of the practice of infant baptism the ministry of the godparents should be more strongly emphasized (§15). In the commentary of the theological board on the institution of godparents it is stressed: "The significance of the godparent as witness of the baptism in personal and legal regard is still existent. The godparent acts as a reminder of baptism to the growing child. . . . For the godparents themselves the task of accompanying their godchildren through life has gained

increasing significance" (Paper, 3.1. and 3.2.).

209. In future revision of the Lima text we regard it as necessary that the role of the baptismal sermon and the relationship of baptism to the proclamation of the gospel should be more clearly expressed (§20) (this is analogous to our comments on communion, see above B.I).

210. A compulsory baptismal talk with parents, guardians and godparents serves as an introduction to the meaning of baptism. It is our conviction that such a talk is fundamental to baptism. In order to promote responsible baptismal practice one should reflect further on the significance of the baptismal talk and about further possibilities for the development of the

understanding of baptism and the tasks of Christian upbringing (cf. Paper, V.I).

## II. On the eucharist

211. Our understanding of communion and of the whole communion service places a different value on the proclamation of the word than is the case in the eucharist document. The significance which we allocate to the act of preaching does not permit that the eucharist alone (communion) is understood as the "central act of the church's worship" (§1; cf. on this point Viewpoints p.11, III.2). Therefore we can only speak of communion appropriately if we discuss it in the context of the act of preaching. The sacraments are according to our understanding proclamatory actions, corresponding to the faith in the promise expressed within them. The administration of the sacrament as such does not have this proclamatory character.
212. We feel that the term "eucharist" is tendentious in our region; "Lord's supper" is more suitable, "holy communion" is our usual description. We recommend that future revisions of the text should not be based just on the term eucharist (§1).
213. With regard to the insistence of the Lima text on a stronger emphasis of the *epiklesis* (§§14ff.) we should like to mention the liturgy of our church, which provides that every service begin with the canticle "Come, Holy Ghost". That demonstrates the epikletic character of the whole service (§16). The response of our theological board to the Accra paper has already drawn attention to this problem, which is also true for the Lima text and requires further deliberations: "The extension of the term *epiklesis* to the whole celebration of the eucharist is to be welcomed, but in this declaration it does not remove the problem of the particular *epiklesis* with consecratory meaning. Therefore the understanding of consecration remains controversial

sial between the confessions. The act of consecration may in the understanding of certain churches be the condition *sine qua non* for the eucharistic event, but that does not mean that this understanding can be forced upon other churches."

214. Christ's sacrifice of himself for us, which is the act of God's grace to us, is testified in the New Testament, but it may not be connected with "offerings" brought by the church. The "offering" of sacrificial gifts in connection with the Lord's supper, and even talk of a "sacrifice" of praise, are not helpful for the necessary clarity of distinction. As far as the concern underlying this sacrificial terminology corresponds to the meaning of the Lord's supper, then it should be expressed in an unmistakable fashion (§§5, 6, 8 Commentary, 10).
215. The forgiveness of sins in connection with the celebration of the Lord's supper is emphasized in Reformation churches and justified by the words of institution recorded in the New Testament; this should be taken more strongly into consideration in the Lima text (cf. Viewpoints, p. 11, III.1).

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*C. On the ministry*

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216. We have the impression that the threefold pattern of the ministry demanded by the Lima text must be seen as the permanent establishment of the understanding found at one particular time in history (§19). On the other hand, it seems to us to be more promising for the ongoing work, if more emphasis is placed on the diversity of services and gifts in the church (§5) than is the case in the present text (§§32, 33).
217. We are convinced that differing understandings and differing forms of the ministry are no obstacle for the fellowship of the churches (§§19,22,51). That is also the presupposition of the Leuenberg Agreement (cf. Article 39 of the Agreement).
218. The Lima text presupposes and recommends the identity of church leadership and ordained ministry. This is not in accordance with the leadership structure of our church — and probably of most of the churches originating from the Reformation (§§11,12). In our church ordained and lay people work together in synods and leadership bodies on all levels.
219. In our opinion the Lima text on ministry fails to include a reference to the fact that the term presbyter/elder/councillor is traditionally used in Reformation churches to describe lay people entrusted with responsibility in the leadership of the church and the local congregation (§30).
220. We regard it as indispensable for the ongoing work on the Lima text that the significance of scientific theology and of theologians teaching in academic institutions should be considered.
221. For years the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck has been ordaining women to the ministry. This decision, taken by the church in the light of the gospel, has proved itself in practice and the church will not retract it (§§18;54; cf. Viewpoints, p. 15, IN.3).

As part of its response this Church sent in four additional documents prepared by its theological commission:

- On the Understanding and Practice of Baptism;
- Response to the Accra Paper "One Baptism, One Eucharist, One Ministry";
- On Intercommunion;
- On Participation of Children at Holy Communion.

Because of limited space and since only one of these documents is directly related to BEM we are publishing only the first of the above documents as an appendix.

**Appendix: Excerpts from "On the understanding and practice of baptism"  
(Didaskalia 29, Kassel 1984)  
Paper of the theological board of the  
Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck**

**<n the baptism service**

2.2: For theological reasons baptism should take place during the Worship of the congregation, sometimes even during children's church, for as incorporation into the congregation it is not only a family event, but also a congregational celebration. But since the pastoral accompaniment of the family is connected with baptism, there are many reasons for a special service of baptism. Baptisms at home or in the clinic are possible as exceptions, where justified by the circumstances.

If the members of the congregation are repeatedly present at baptisms during services of worship, their experience is also extended with respect to their own state of baptism. The place of baptismal memorial is above all the service of baptism itself.

2.3: There will be differences from one congregation to another, as to whether a few dates in the liturgical calendar are fixed for baptism, or baptismal services are offered regularly, or baptisms are possible practically every Sunday. The baptism can take place at the beginning or at the end of the service (cf. Orders of Service I, 42; **III**, 4).

**(ood reasons why the church baptizes infants**

THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*A. On the justification of infant baptism*

1: The church's action in baptism is not self-authorizing, even though it is a long-standing custom. It must prove itself to be a part of the church's ministry of evangelism and be justified as such.

2: Therefore the baptism of infants may not seek its theological justification in arguments which only have an indirect relation to the New Testament understanding of baptism. The theological justification of infant baptism must rather be derived from the nature of baptism itself, as it is represented in New Testament witness.

3: The church baptizes with reference to the commission experienced in the lordship of Jesus.

It testifies in baptism: We are entrusted to the Lord and accepted into God's action for our salvation in Jesus Christ. In baptism He incorporates us into his people in the community of the faithful and calls us by the Holy Spirit to a new life of obedience in the faith. This faith experiences and grants reconciliation in Jesus Christ, shows itself alive in love and lives in hope of God (New Testament references: Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15f; Acts 2:38; 10:48; John 3:5; Mark 1:9-11; Rom. 6:2ff.; 1 Cor. 12:13ff.; Gal. 3:24-29; Eph. 2:4-10; 4:4f.; 5:25f.; Col. 1:12ff.; 2:10-15; Tit. 3:3-7; Heb. 10:22f.; 1 Pet. 3:18, 20f.).

4: There are not two kinds of baptism — infant baptism and adult baptism — but there is one Christian baptism in the form of infant baptism and adult baptism.

5: Even though baptism is not offered as such in the New Testament, and though there is no explicit reference to infant baptism in the New Testament, or the New Testament community took the practice of adult baptism (missionary baptism) for granted in their situation at that time, that does not rule out the later practice of infant baptism, as long as that baptism has the same basis, the same meaning and the same aim. The mere fact that there is no reference to infant baptism, or the historical uncertainty about a possible practice of infant baptism in the New Testament, is not sufficient to deny infant baptism on New Testament grounds. The question is, rather, whether the practice of infant baptism can be reconciled with the New Testament understanding of the basis, meaning and aim of baptism and with the understanding of the gospel to which it testifies. The understanding of salvation prerequisite to the New Testament understanding of baptism and the fact that children are included in the future salvation heralded by the coming of the kingdom of God, revealed in Jesus' preaching and actions — these open up the possibility of including children in the act of baptism as well. If the candidates for baptism are at differing stages in life, that does not affect the character of the baptismal act. To be sure, it does set particular accents in the understanding of the action of baptism, and also with regard to the new life manifested by, grounded in and intended by the administration of baptism — a life rooted in faith and moving towards faith. In this sense the New Testament understanding of baptism justifies and upholds the action of the church in infant baptism.

#### *B. On the relationship of faith and baptism*

1: The connection between faith and baptism is also an indispensable prerequisite for infant baptism. Baptism and faith belong together.

2: In the New Testament this connection is a united occurrence: preaching—faith (repentance/belief) — confession — baptism. In the baptism of a child this united occurrence is also meant, but the elements have a different order.

3: Infant baptism takes place and can only take place in the community of the faithful. It is an action ventured by the parents, the godparents and the congregation in faith, in the desire to entrust this child to God and the knowledge that it is entrusted to God in Jesus Christ by baptism. So infant baptism originates out of the faith of the community, out of its own state of baptism, in an act of obedience and trust carried out on that basis.

4: Infant baptism takes place in faith for the future, on the basis of the faith requested and hoped for in the baptism of this child and his entrustment to the Lord.

5: Infant baptism is thus borne by the faith of the community, which precedes the faith of the individual, and rooted in God's gracious affection towards this person, so that it is a fundamental occurrence for his faith. It is the event of his entrustment to the Lord in the explicitness of his personal affection: "I have called you by your name, you are mine."

6. 6.1: Infant baptism takes place "in faith for the future", that means, it is an occurrence which sets this person on the path of faith, so that on this path his calling to faith may become evident. The united occurrence of faith and baptism means that neither the act of faith nor the act of baptism can stand alone without being exposed to misunderstanding and abuse. The necessary correlation of faith and baptism demands the response of faith which was intended by the act of baptism, the baptismal candidate's "Yes" to God's call uttered in baptism. God's "Yes" to this person, expressed in the act of baptism, reaches its aim in this person's "Yes", which he utters all his life over and over again.

6.2: The fundamental baptismal event — God's "Yes" to this person — expects his answering "Yes" and achieves therein its fulfilment, its wholeness, its unity of occurrence. If the person does not say "Yes", that does not make God's "Yes" void, meaningless or invalid. But it has not yet been apprehended and comprehended and adopted in its reality, reconciling him with God and freeing him to a life with God (cf. M. Luther: "Where there is no faith, no baptism can help").

6.3: Thus baptism is not an event that can be finished and done with. It is directed towards and envelops the whole of life, of a lifetime. Baptism is never merely something that happened in the past, but it is something that determines life in the present and the future. For the "Yes" of faith is always a preliminary "Yes" that continuously has to be spoken anew and repeated. Only then is it effective in the present.

The "Yes" of faith, that belongs to baptism, is thus not to be ascribed to a certain point in time. Its reality is to be found in a movement in the believer's life, in a biography of faith. This includes both hidden beginnings and moments of intensive consciousness, but it is never brought to completion.

With regard to this life movement and biography claimed by baptism, one should not place a false emphasis on the moment of baptism. Whether one is baptized as a child or as an adult, the situation is basically the same with regard to this "Yes" of faith to baptism, which has to be spoken now, and over and over again in the course of life.

This "Yes" has no other quality in adult baptism as "believers' baptism" than the "Yes" which someone baptized as an infant later speaks as the confession of his own faith.

Whether baptismal instruction takes place before or after baptism as proclamation of the gospel and as "Christian nurture" makes no fundamental difference for the "Yes" to baptism which has to be spoken at any given time. Baptism achieves its aim in both cases, and the continuing entreaty remains the same — to return to the "Yes" spoken by God in baptism and to allow oneself over and over again to be called under the promise and commitment inherent in it.

7: In evaluating the relationship between faith and baptism in their joint context one can sum up as follows:

7.1: Baptism does not take place in the name of the Christian faith, but in the name of the Triune God.

7.2: It is not faith that forms the basis of baptism, but Christ the Lord.

7.3: It is not faith that underlies the reality of salvation opened by baptism, but the salvation worked in Jesus Christ.

7.4: Baptism demands and expects faith. It testifies to faith and alludes to the basis of faith. But baptism is not primarily the act in which faith testifies to itself. Rather, the Lord testifies to himself, and faith accepts this testimony.

7.5: Baptism is above all else God's action towards us for our salvation, the invitation to fellowship with him, the evidence of his grace, the calling to a new life in the power of his spirit, the incorporation into his people, into the body of Christ.

8: Decisive for baptism is the salvation accomplished for all men by God in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, in which He offers his grace to us all. This, like baptism, is an expression of God's initiative preceding all mankind's capabilities. God takes action precisely at the point where men are powerless to act, with his "anticipating grace".

In the practice of infant baptism this aspect of anticipating grace is dominant and particularly visible. God demonstrates his saving kindness, He calls and chooses men — that consists precisely in this anticipation, which accepts man in his godlessness, weakness and helplessness and has mercy upon him (Rom. 5:6-8; 1 John 4:10).

9: The grace of God also anticipates our faith, which can only exist and endure by the action of his grace. Whoever overlooks this and claims faith as a human achievement misunderstands the New Testament sense of the connection between faith and baptism.

#### *C. Vicarious action and free decision*

1: From what has been said it can be deduced: Faith is not at our disposal — neither our own faith nor the faith of another human being (cf. on this point Luther's explanation of the Third Article).

Infant baptism is also not an attempt to have the faith of the child at one's disposal. It is rather so, that the congregation intercedes for the child, that as a child of God it may become a believer.

2: The premise of freedom to take a decision in the future may seem morally correct, but in this connection it is merely an abstraction and offers neither an appropriate representation of the real situation of the child nor of the adolescent. The biography of a human is always dependent, and is partly determined by decisions previously made. We have not become what we are by our own efforts, by our own unconditional "free" decision; rather, one way or the other, we have a share in that which others are for us or have decided on our behalf. Parents cannot withdraw from this situation and their responsibility for helping to determine the life and development of their child — and be it only by the conscious or unconscious refusal to take a certain decision. The character of the parents plays a role in the formation of the children's character, it helps to determine the way they experience life, it passes on certain impressions to them and denies them, or conceals from them, other kinds of experience. For the children the parents' existence can signify security, meaningfulness and encouragement, or it can be a burden to them, restrict or dismay them: it can open doors, or bolt them shut. The

nature of the relationship and the interaction between parents and children also includes vicarious action of parents for their children. That is what I've given them a special responsibility.

3: But can there also be vicarious action with regard to the faith of the children?

3.1: No one can represent a human being in his faith, for that is the most personal thing in his life. It is the statement of his own self-awareness, self-expression, the unmitigated realization of his relationship to God in the hearing of God's word. No one can say on someone else's behalf: "I believe." No one can anticipate this event, it is at nobody's disposal. No one can predict or forestall a person's decision to believe, which is the working of God.

3.2: Nonetheless there is also a connection between a person's decision to believe, his personal experience of faith and the community of the faithful in which he lives.

3.2.1: Children are always involved in whatever determines the life of the family and the parents. So they are also always involved in the life of faith. They participate and they have a share in the life determined by faith. Here God's word is heard, his presence is made known in prayer and witness, his love is experienced and manifested, forgiveness is granted in the knowledge of his forgiveness.

3.2.2: Christian parents know that Jesus is the Lord of life — of their life, of which the children are also a part. In the baptism of their children Christian parents testify to Jesus as the Lord of their life.

So the baptism of children occurs in the knowledge, which is evident in faith, that we belong to the risen and living Lord together with our children and that we are going to meet the Lord at his second coming together with our children — in the hope that they will go along this road with us.

3.2.3: Therefore it is consistent for Christian parents to have their children baptized. That is probably also one of the historical reasons why the original baptism of adults did not remain the only form. Infant baptism is an action which follows from the certainty of faith. It is rooted in the knowledge that the children are enfolded in God's salvation, in his grace and loving kindness, in his promises, and that the kingdom of God should be received as by a little child. That is in accordance with biblical thinking. It is the certainty, based on the promises and on faith, that the children of Christian parents belong to the Christian community together with them. "Because children are called by Christ, with the parents and through them, they are entitled to baptism, in which act their calling and their membership of the community is manifested and realized".<sup>1</sup>

3.2.4: Baptism in the form of infant baptism makes it clear where we belong from the very beginning. It places a person's life in the community of Jesus from the very beginning under the sign of the promise which is given by Jesus Christ as a claim upon us. It is the fundamental "signpost" for a life leading towards the Lord and borne along by his Lordship.

P. Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit*, 1952, pp. 552f.

3.2.5: Baptism in the form of infant baptism does no harm to a person, but entrusts him to the power of good. It claims nothing on his behalf, of which he might be ashamed, for the gospel is the power of God which grants life, leads to life and liberates to truly human life.

3.2.6: In its nature as pre-decision, infant baptism is intended first of all to testify to God's decision for us: He has decided in our favour in Jesus Christ. And this decision of God's in our favour is valid for the whole of our life from the very beginning.

3.2.7: In its nature as a pre-decision determining the life of the child, infant baptism is not an inadmissible disposition over this person, which would rob him of the freedom of his own decision and challenge him to defiance. This "pre-decision" on behalf of this person means no more than this: It gives him a "bonus" of love — security in the fellowship of the faithful, their accompaniment along the way, the explicit promise that God is for us.

3.2.8: The decision of the parents to have their child baptized is their decision on behalf of the child. It does not take away his freedom to decide to confirm his baptism in his own faith, but rather makes the way free for this decision.

#### *D. Infant baptism and/or "believers' baptism"*

1: However much faith always comprises one's own hearing of the word, decision and witness, baptism is primarily concerned with God's action for man and in man. Man's action is the response to God's action. Faith is not intrinsic to the salvation received, it is the receiver of salvation. God's grace can only be comprehended and apprehended as a free gift. Thus "activity" in regard to God's action is receptivity. Strictly speaking, the most appropriate theological (not psychological) characteristic of human participation in the reception of salvation in faith is pure passivity (justification by grace alone).

2: In the discussion of baptism one continually encounters references to the fact that the believer needs to make his own decision in faith, one speaks of his own repentance, his own activity in renunciation and dedication, his own desire for baptism, his own coming to baptism and his own confession of faith in baptism. Those are all features which are characteristic of the connection between belief and baptism in the New Testament and also in the "believers' baptism" of adults. In this context they are also justified.

Since they only hold good for the so-called believers' baptism, these features are also encountered as arguments criticizing, contradicting and discrediting the practice of infant baptism. Measured against these conditions infant baptism seems to many people to be a "profoundly irregular baptismal practice".<sup>2</sup> However on closer examination this argumentation is scarcely convincing.

2.1: Misgivings about many manifestations of national church reality frequently look for, and find, their corroboration in the way infant baptism

is practised. When hardly any attention is paid to a responsible treatment of the sacrament of baptism, when parents, godparents and congregation frequently fail to keep the commitment made at baptism, then serious damage is done to the life of the congregation. But it is not infant baptism itself that is the cause of this damage, but rather the "profoundly irregular" reality of the life of the congregation. This is where criticism and church reform have their proper starting point.

2.2: Simply changing the baptismal custom, replacing infant baptism exclusively with "believers' baptism" of adults, does not mean that the life-style of the congregation will be fundamentally altered, unless an inner renewal also takes place.

2.3: But adult baptism as such cannot be the source of such inner renewal: "... the expectations connected with freewill baptism must be judged sceptically. Just as the church did not perish as a result of the long practice of infant baptism, so it will not be saved by another practice of baptism. ... one should not imagine that one can revive the congregation by changing the custom of baptism. That means that one would welcome a reduction of the massive ardour for the salvation of the church, which poisons the discussion, in favour of a more objective debate."<sup>3</sup> "Even nowadays it will only lead to an inadmissible 'psychologism' if one attempts to resolve the crisis of baptism in the congregation with a more stringent 'disciplina' applied to baptism itself. The mistake lies in the preaching, which maintains a general Christianity: it stands in the way of what is in fact intended by infant baptism, namely personal faith."<sup>4</sup>

3: Over against the insistence on the candidate's own decision in favour of faith and baptism, which is consistent with adult baptism but lacking in infant baptism, it should be considered and remembered that the decision to believe and the affirmation of baptism is also intended in infant baptism and forms the indispensable aim in the united occurrence consisting of preaching, faith and baptism.

3.1: Baptism in this case "anticipates" the faith of the baptismal candidate. Faith can only follow after the act of baptism as an event which is sought for, hoped for and expected, but not a foregone conclusion. That is certainly quite different to the believers' baptism of adults, and in this order of events it seems to stand at odds with the New Testament reports of adult baptism.

3.2: Here it becomes clear that the one baptism does have differing conditions as infant baptism and as adult baptism, and that the conditions of adult baptism are not to be forced upon infant baptism. This only leads to the assertion of an apparent reality, to postulated dogmatic constructions, which in the last event still cannot justify this form of baptism (cf. the assertion of a so-called *fides infantium* — i.e. faith worked by the Spirit in the infant receiving baptism — or of a vicarious faith). It would be better to point to the different context of the relationship between faith and baptism

;K. Barth, *KDW*, 4 p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Ratschow, *Die eine christliche Taufe*, 1972, p. 38. <sup>3</sup> O. Weber, *Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, Vol. II, 1962, p. 678.



which is given in infant baptism, to the divergent reasoning underlying the decision to baptize, namely the wishes of parents and godparents. But the endorsement is no other than that prevailing in adult baptism: God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ. This justification of the decision to baptize does not stand at odds with, or even in contradiction to, God's work of salvation testified in the New Testament and the understanding of the basis, meaning and aim of baptism in the New Testament, but it is fully congruent with it as a meaningful counterpart under differing conditions.

4: The right to emphasize the candidate's decision to believe, and in practice only to baptize those who are of age, should not be put in question with respect to New Testament baptismal practice. Nonetheless, it is precisely the way in which they are asserted nowadays which gives rise to considerable misgivings.

4.1: Can the free act of belief, to which one appeals, really uphold the claims made for it? "Freewill decision" is not by a long way the guarantee of a decision to believe. Nor is it necessarily so, that the profession of one's own faith is identical with the faith that is "valid" before God.

4.2: Is the prerequisite of faith required for "believers' baptism" really fulfilled in such a fashion, that one can speak without hesitation of a complete congruence between God's "Yes" and this person's "Yes"?

4.3: Does the person's estimation of his own faith not gain a significance, which is out of proportion to its significance in the New Testament?

4.4: Is it not unreasonable to demand of a person that he reflect in this way on the state and condition of his own faith, so that he must decide when he has enough faith and is therefore mature for baptism? Are we not then continually threatened by doubt, religious scruples, by degradation into a "psychologized" faith, claims of special experiences, by auto-suggestion which feigns certainty — all because the law of a particular chronology of belief and baptism triggers off this compulsion?

4.5: Even when the suspicion is rejected, that faith itself is here turned into works, does it not factually become the basis of baptism and thus misunderstand itself?

5: In the situation of a national church, of a Christian community or a Christian home the connection between faith and baptism cannot be seen in the same light as in the missionary situation of the New Testament. The conditions are different, and a different accent is placed here on the decision to believe. However, in many ways the present-day reality comes close to the conditions of that missionary situation. The baptism of adults is then relevant, which was never controversial as a missionary (proselyte) baptism.

5.1: Probably, in deciding to introduce adult baptism in a Christian community, similar compulsions will once again take effect, such as are held against the practice of infant baptism as an action supported by church custom. Thus the decision to be baptized will once again be attributed to a certain age, or older children will desire to receive baptism because they feel themselves at a disadvantage in respect to their baptized school-fellows.

5.2: In practice it is to be supposed that, in the baptism of those of age or believers, the quality of experience that is hoped for and always asserted will not be able to fulfill what one expects of it: namely the experience of

certainty, which bears the believer through all temptations and doubts. It may be that here one is seeking in emotional feelings a security which even the act of adult baptism cannot offer.

#### *E. Re-baptism?*

1: The questions discussed here — the relationship between faith and baptism, the significance of the decision taken by the candidate and the new determination of his life — have led over and over again in particular situations to a rejection of infant baptism and the exclusive propagation of adult baptism, from the time of the Reformation right down to the present day. The consequence has been the formation of special Christian groups.

In spite of the misunderstanding of baptism which is to be observed here, one should not mistake the intention: for these are also people who desire to take their Christianity seriously. They want to practise baptism just as it appears to them in the New Testament; as a momentary unity of preaching, personal confession of faith and performance of baptism. They take the decision to believe seriously, as a life-time decision belonging to the act of baptism. And with their criticism of the infant baptism practised by the church they continually question the rightful understanding of baptism, the rightful practice of baptism and the baptismal responsibility which the church has to bear in it.

2: However, if in this connection the re-baptism of those baptized as infants is demanded and practised, then this must be unequivocally contradicted on the basis of the understanding of baptism in the New Testament. There is only one Christian baptism, and it can only be received once. Christian baptism is not repeatable, it is a unique baptism. In contrast to the sacrament of holy communion, which is concerned precisely with the repetition of the fellowship supper as fellowship with the Lord, baptism is characterized by its uniqueness and unrepeatability.

3: This underlying, substantial uniqueness is based on what occurs and is testified in baptism: we are accepted into God's saving action for us in Jesus Christ. We come to belong to Christ in participation in his death and resurrection, which creates new life in us, in the reconciliation with God, which he has achieved, in the love of God, which has taken hold of us, and in the fellowship, which binds us to one another in him and re-creates, re-founds and re-determines our life as a life in grace under the commandment and promise of God.

4: So the uniqueness of baptism is based upon the uniqueness of this event, which, because it has occurred, has occurred once and for all and therefore retains its validity. God's word of reconciliation and grace, proclaimed and promised in baptism, God's "Yes" to this person, who is baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, remains spoken to this person. It remains in power, just as that which has been effected in Christ's death has occurred for us once and for all. It testifies to baptism as participation in this event — this "once-and-for-all", unrepeatable and nonetheless always present. Thus it is here a question of the uniqueness, which exists in God's action on our behalf.

- unique, because it happened once and for all in Jesus Christ, so that we belong to him;
- unique, because God will not remove his kindness from us, and it will not be removed by our actions and failures;
- unique, because we are incorporated into the body of Christ, we are "added" to his community;
- unique, because our calling has become explicit in baptism and therefore the state of baptism is permanently binding.

5: Thus the uniqueness and unrepeatability of baptism points precisely to that which is not the object of human decision and human judgment. For the uniqueness and unrepeatability of baptism cannot be justified by the way in which humans participate in it. The "Yes" expected from the person baptized as the response of faith is not a "Yes" spoken once and for all, but a response that has to be repeated over and over again. The whole life of the one baptized should consist of this "Yes". Thus the whole life of the one baptized becomes a life in baptism. Also the value of experiencing the act of baptism, to which one attributes a special memorial character, cannot justify the uniqueness and unrepeatability of baptism. Rather it makes it questionable, for experience demands certainty in repetition. And where faith is declared to be the decisive criterion for the validity of the act of baptism, does that faith, which goes through misunderstandings and crises of unbelief, not call for a renewal of baptism over and over again? These observations alone make it obvious that this understanding of the reality of baptism, referring to faith and experience, does not correspond to the understanding testified to by the New Testament.

6: With respect to this unique character attached to baptism, as a form of God's saving action, there may be no repetition in the sense of a second baptism. "No one can be baptized twice with the baptism of Christ."<sup>5</sup> "Every human can only receive baptism once. This uniqueness is presupposed without exception in the New Testament scriptures."<sup>6</sup> Even if a re-baptism is understood or interpreted otherwise, it is in the face of the reality of a person's state of baptism an arbitrary attempt to repeat what God has done for us and in us once and for all. So in the last event it is to deny or to dispute the action of God. Even if it is not admitted or intended, it proves to be an attempt to declare God's promise as null and void and then to reactivate it on one's own initiative. Even when those who let themselves be re-baptized intend to take their obedience in faith seriously, they must face up to the question, whether this is not just a breach of that obedience in faith, to which those baptized are called.

7: The uniqueness and unrepeatability of baptism, which is valid for the entire life of the person baptized, destines his whole life to be a life in the power and promise of baptism. Life in baptism is a life in the continual "affirmation of the promise going back to baptism, placed over life as a sign once and for all. Thus the understanding of baptism is the precise correlative

to the understanding of justification."<sup>7</sup> Life that comes from baptism and goes back to baptism is the daily path to repentance, the daily path under the promise of grace, the daily granted possibility of living anew out of faith.

8: Living out of baptism is not possible without the reminder of baptism. It reminds us: do not forget who you are and where you belong; do not forget why you have been called, what you have been granted and promised, what God has done for you in Jesus Christ; do not forget that God has called you by your name and made you his witness; do not forget that you may live in the fellowship of the redeemed and are therefore free to be there for others.

The Christian community can only be community in such reminder of baptism, in which it lives as the community of the Lord and into which it accepts baptized children as well.

9: Such a reminder of baptism is something other than the renewal of baptism. For it is not a case of a renewal of the act of baptism as the performance of re-baptism, but of the renewal of the memory of that which happened once and for all in baptism, of the renewed prayer for God's Holy Spirit, of the renewed hearing of the gospel, of the renewal of repentance, of renewed life out of the promise of baptism. One encounters the reference to a so-called renewal of baptism nowadays as the justification of a renewed act of baptism upon one baptized. This terminology seems to imply a certain recognition of infant baptism, since it expresses the renewal of a baptism which has already taken place and thus apparently preserves the connection with the fact of being already baptized. But this terminology is deceptive, if the recognition of infant baptism is associated with it. A renewal of baptism which takes the form of a new rite of baptism is not a renewal of baptism, but rather a new baptism, a re-baptism. Herein the fact that the person is already baptized is denied, declared null and void, by the action itself. This signifies the denial of baptism in the form of infant baptism. Thus the action of a renewal of baptism cannot be distinguished in its presupposition and in its consequences from a re-baptism which explicitly denies that infant baptism is true baptism. (This then leads here to a rejection of the characterization of one's own baptism as re-baptism.)

By denying infant baptism, in so-called renewal of baptism and in the re-baptism which is not understood as renewal, such action automatically excludes itself from the fellowship of the church which accepts infant baptism. "The doctrine and practice of re-baptism destroys the unity and the fellowship of the church, by regarding all those baptized as children as unbaptized and therefore not members of the body of Christ."<sup>8</sup> This interpretation agrees in principle with the declaration of convergences of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches with the title "Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry" (Lima text, 1982, B13): "Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as 're-baptism' must be avoided."

5 D. Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, 1952, p. 158.

6 E. Schlöcker, *Die Lehre von der Taufe*, 1969, p. 93.

7 G. Ebeling, *Dogmatik III*, p. 326.

8 D. Bonhoeffer, *Gutachten zur Tauffrage*, 1942.

### ■. Baptismal responsibility

1.1: The right regard for the commission of baptism always implies the right regard for baptismal responsibility, too. The church has to accept responsibility for its action in baptism. This means that in all that it does, or refuses to do, the church must be aware and certain of acting in the sense of the commission to baptize and therein to be in accordance with the basis, meaning and aim of baptism.

1.2: This baptismal responsibility (as *recte administrare sacramenta*) is a responsibility entrusted to the whole church, not just the affair of one individual. So it cannot be assigned solely to the pastor, or the presbytery, or the parents and godparents, or the church leaders, but it always concerns the life and responsibility of the whole Christian community. Baptismal responsibility thus means from the very outset co-responsibility, in which every member of the congregation is involved, even if pastor and presbytery have to bear it most directly by reason of their special commission.

1.3: The duty of baptismal responsibility is not just given when baptism is requested and possibly refused, it continues long after the act of baptism is performed. Indeed, baptismal responsibility is rooted in baptism, for the community enters into a commitment by that action. This ongoing baptismal responsibility simply means that what is done, promised, witnessed and pledged in baptism is taken seriously.

1.4: Thus the most direct and most impressive expression of baptismal responsibility occurs when all the members of the congregation live in baptism — in a constant memorial of baptism and awareness of what is implied in the knowledge "I am baptized" by way of promise and pledge and inauguration of new life.

1.5: Preaching should be emphasized as a particular form and possibility of baptismal responsibility and baptismal memorial. Right preaching, and in particular the right preaching on the occasion of baptism, is always a reminder of baptismal responsibility as well and leads the congregation to the realization of its baptismal responsibility. It makes clear what it means to be baptized and to live out of one's baptism, it issues an invitation to baptism and it helps to ensure that baptism is not denied or disrespected. If baptismal responsibility is realized insufficiently, if the significance of baptism is hardly comprehended any more, if a Christian is hardly ever reminded of his own state of baptism, then one may be sure that the baptismal practice of the church is problematical.

1.6: Sensitivity for this problem and theological uncertainty, whether one can still justify infant baptism as the normal form of baptism in our national church under the present circumstances, are widespread nowadays. But it should be clear both from historical experience and from theological insight, "that it would be self-deception to suppose that one could dispose of the burden of the baptism problem altogether simply by correcting the mode of baptism, . . . for it was repeatedly the case that infant baptism existed alongside high baptismal responsibility or that adult baptism was accompanied by lax baptismal responsibility".<sup>9</sup> "Doing away with infant baptism

<sup>9</sup> M. Mezger, *Die Amtshandlungen der Kirche*, I, 1957, pp. 172f.

is not an effective method for combatting the secularization of the church, Tor 'believers' baptism' also offers no security against severe relapses. On the contrary, it is the particular emphasis of personal conversion experiences which often leads to fanatical excesses and set-backs, as has been shown in practice."<sup>10</sup>

Because faith comes from hearing the word preached, and the church itself lives solely by the word of God and is built up and renewed by hearing this word (*creatura verbi*), for this reason the decay of this church, damage to its congregational life, misunderstandings of belief and unbelief and disobedience in the life of those baptized cannot be overcome by new baptismal regulations or church ordinances and sanctions, but in the last event solely by the working of God's Holy Spirit through God's word — that is to say, in hearing his word and taking it seriously. Therefore preaching, the proclamation of the word in its broadest sense, gains the greatest significance here. It is made concrete in further particular forms of baptismal preaching and baptismal memorial: the preparatory talk before baptism, the counselling of parents, godparents and other members of the congregation, in children's church and confirmation classes as baptismal instruction.

2: Baptismal responsibility is to be realized in the life of the congregation and in particular in preaching and in church instruction as nurture in the Christian faith. But despite this reference to the primary task, the other duty which also belongs to baptismal responsibility is not yet fulfilled. For a part of baptismal responsibility also consists in examining whether under the special circumstances of an individual case baptism is justifiable, and whether one may, or must, baptize in every case when baptism is requested. Many people nowadays are worried about the "baptism crisis", there is constant discussion about the church practice of infant baptism, questioning whether it can be justified. These facts challenge us to carry out such an examination, just as much as the baptismal responsibility which was always laid upon the church by the act of baptism. Baptism is not something which can be taken for granted or could be seen to have sufficient reason for existence simply because it is a church custom or tradition.

2.1: To be sure the request to baptize should be taken seriously in every case and demands the investigation of the desire expressed. However, this investigation requires at the same time the examination of the question, whether baptism as an act of the church is to be answered for.

Every baptism is both a decision on the part of the one who desires baptism as well as on the part of the church administering the baptism. And here there are situations, in which the one who is to take on the task of baptizing is confronted with the question, whether he may act in accordance with the request for baptism in this situation, or whether the responsible treatment of the sacrament of baptism points rather to a refusal or a postponement of baptism.

The problems connected with such a decision in individual cases should not be overlooked, but fundamentally it cannot be disputed that in obedi-

ence to its mission and for the sake of the credibility of its baptismal practice the church can be obliged to refuse a baptism, i.e. not yet to baptize in this concrete situation. Responsible exercise of baptism must include the possibility of refusal, with which the respect for baptism in this case is made manifest. The credibility of the practice of the whole church is affected if, both in infant baptism and in adult baptism, there is only a "Yes" and not also a "No", when necessitated.

2.2: Such a "No" may not be spoken lightly and legalistically, simply by way of insisting on the ordinances and customs of the church.

Such a "No" may also not be left to the solitary judgment of a single clergyman (or -woman).

Such a "No" may not be spoken without intensive, clarifying counselling sessions with parents, relatives and godparents.

Such a "No" may only be ventured after the failure of all efforts to change the situation and to offer the appropriate assistance.

Such a "No" may never be spoken finally and absolutely, but only preliminarily. It gains its credibility precisely because it does not abandon the hope of being retracted.

Such a "No" may not be a "No" to the persons concerned. The care for these persons in their situation remains the pastoral duty of the clergyman (or-woman) and the whole congregation.

In particular, this "No" may not be misunderstood as a "No" to the child whose baptism is refused under the circumstances involved. For this decision may not mean that the congregation does not wish to accept the child into its midst, that it excludes it from the life of the congregation, that it denies it affection and accompaniment. On the contrary, it will wish to make it ready to accept baptism.

2.3: After this necessary clarification of the sense and the consequences underlying such a "No", that wishes to be transformed later into a "Yes", it is at the same time obvious: the term "refusal of baptism" does not correspond exactly to the meaning of the withholding of baptism, for it only indicates the refusal, but not the desire to overcome the dividing hurdles. It is therefore more appropriate to speak of a "postponement of baptism", and not only to speak of it, but also to understand every withholding of baptism in the sense of a postponement and to make it understood as such; for the invitation remains, to be called on to the path of faith and therefore of baptism.

2.4: If it cannot fundamentally be well disputed that baptism cannot be answered for in certain circumstances, then the question is, how can the situations be more nearly described, or defined, in which such a decision appears necessary. Can particular criteria be formulated for this decision, and do precisely describable circumstances exist, from which a postponement of baptism necessarily follows? We are of the opinion that this is not possible. To be sure, attempts in this direction have been made over and over again in connection with considerations and measures of baptismal discipline.

Thus Bonhoeffer, for example, stated in his *Taufgutachten* that the proper Protestant baptismal discipline would "have to direct its attention to the

fact, whether or not believing godparents and parents as church members bring the child to be baptized. First of all and in a positive sense this discipline will take the instruction about baptism for congregation, godparents and parents more seriously than hitherto; it will witness to the peculiar grace of infant baptism, which may not be squandered; it will warn against the misuse of baptism, and where necessary it will refuse to baptize, should baptism in its considered opinion not be requested for reasons of faith. But in its refusal it will not be guided by any kind of rigorous judgment, but by the love of God for the world and his community."<sup>11</sup> In his early work *Sanctorum Communio* (1930) he already saw that "there is a limit to the meaning of infant baptism, if the congregation can no longer seriously consider 'bearing' the child, if the church is in a state of inner confusion and it is certain that the child will come into contact with it for the first and last time at baptism. The church should be open to everyone, but it should remain conscious of its responsibility thereby. Only its responsibility before God should allow it to close its gates."<sup>12</sup>

2.5: Mezger is otherwise very cautious in his judgment, he advises circumspection in this question and lays more emphasis on other possibilities of assistance. Nonetheless, he feels it appropriate "that the baptismal responsibility must and can be practised at least in those cases where the sacrament is indubitably despised",<sup>13</sup> and he adds, as a further weighty reason: "For should it become apparent that the prerequisites for baptism were missing in every respect, because neither the parents themselves wish to be Christians, nor even the godparents have the least notion of their ministry (so that their common 'Yes' to the baptism of this child would be hypocrisy and mockery), then we are in a position to say to the adults immediately—without taking anything away from the child — 'Baptism—at this time? No!' And the justification, which is to be added, makes a clear distinction of what is each person's share: 'The child is not to be blamed, but you, the indifferent adults. And the congregation does not deny the child anything, but only you, the disinterested guardians.'<sup>14</sup> In similar fashion P. Graff had already stated: "The decisive point of view in judging, whether infant baptism can be answered for, is this: that those called to bring up the child profess their own baptism."<sup>15</sup> In a new application of this thought, which also clearly includes the congregation with its own responsibility and possibilities, G. Ebeling says that "the defensibility of infant baptism depends on the circumstances of the church: whether or not those responsible for children, as well as those responsible for the church as a whole, can guarantee to the adolescent child, as best they can judge, the continuation of the profession which was certainly expressed at baptism."<sup>16</sup>

1 *Op. cit.*, p. 452.

2 *hoc. cit.*, p. 180.

3 *Amtshandlungen* I, p. 194.

4 *hoc. cit.*, p. 191.

5 In *Geschichte der Auflösung der alten gottesdienstlichen Formen*, I, p. 372.

6 *Dogmatik* III, p. 327.

A further reason for exclusion from baptism which is occasionally mentioned is the by no means unrealistic case, that parents who desire baptism for their child are themselves not church members or have an "indifferent or even hostile attitude to the faith in Jesus Christ".<sup>17</sup>

2.6: The criteria enumerated and the situations described here differ from one another considerably and cannot be interpreted as a catalogue of precise case descriptions with unequivocal courses of action. It proves questionable, whether such a catalogue of unequivocal reasons for exclusion from baptism can be generally formulated at all. The individual situations are far too various to be generally grasped in all their peculiarities, they are only to be approached in pastoral counselling. In describing these cases the duty is hardly recognizable that in all the cases mentioned the conversation about baptism must begin on the basis of the request for baptism and be continued in an intensive and continuous pastoral concern. Presumably no one who requests baptism of a child will withdraw from such a conversation. Only, if parents wanted to withdraw themselves and their child completely from the congregation exercising its baptismal responsibility, it is not comprehensible why they request baptism at all.

In another respect a significant point of view is missing in many of these reasons for exclusion. The baptismal responsibility of the congregation is here only perceived in a negative sense as refusal, when particular prerequisites are missing in the parents and godparents requesting the baptism. Is it not so, that in these cases the congregation is particularly challenged to exercise its own responsibility and to take over duties which the parents or godparents cannot, or will not, take on themselves — for the sake of the child?

Thus the congregation could take over the position of godparent for this child itself and also express this in the ministry of a congregational godparent.

2.7: In this sense we hope that we also are in agreement with the recommendation expressed by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches in its declaration of convergences "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (Lima text, B16): "In order to overcome their differences, believer baptists and those who practise infant baptism should reconsider certain aspects of their practices. The first may seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace. The latter must guard against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ."

#### **On the ministry of godparents**

Has the church considered allocating new functions to the ministry of godparents or defining the function of godparents anew?

<sup>17</sup> Cf W. Andersen, *Lob der Taufe*, 1950, p. 88.

222. The significance of the godparent as witness of the baptism in personal and legal regard is still existent. The godparent acts as a reminder of baptism to the growing child.
223. Most godparents nowadays are unable to meet expectations as guarantor of Christian upbringing, but they approve of the activities offered by (the church for the Christian nurture, for example children's church, play school, religious education in schools, confirmation classes, and so on. For the godparents themselves the task of accompanying their godchildren through life has gained increasing significance. In view of the social isolation of small families the godparents represent a meaningful and necessary extension of the child's and parents' social contacts.

#### **Practical suggestions for baptism**

##### *1. On the way to baptism*

1.1: If the pastor learns of the birth of a child, he/she is recommended to get into contact with the parents. That can take place by means of a letter of congratulation (with or without a mention of baptism), alternatively in the way of visiting the mother in hospital or the family at home.

1.2: If the parents register their child for baptism, then one must at all events distinguish between this registration and the conversation on baptism which follows. A detailed baptismal talk is a necessary stage on the way to baptism (cf. Order of Services III, 4).

1.3: For this talk certain viewpoints are to be considered:

1.3.1: Both parents and if possible the godparents too should be present.

1.3.2: The place where the baptismal talk is held will be different from one case to another. The following reasons recommend a talk in the home of the family requesting baptism: the parents regard the visit of the pastor as an attentive gesture; because of the children they cannot both leave the house together; they feel themselves more secure in their own living room; the pastor has the opportunity of getting to know the child and the family surroundings.

In favour of a talk in the pastor's home or in a room belonging to the congregation may be said: the parents are not so easily distracted outside their own four walls; if they go to visit the pastor they have a clearer understanding of what is to be expected; it is possible to remove inhibitions about entering church buildings and improve confidence.

1.3.3: The baptismal talk can be held with the individual families or in a group. The advantages of an individual conversation are: it offers the possibility of getting into personal contact; it is easier to get to know the situation of the individual family; it offers a chance to talk openly and to discuss confidential questions; there is opportunity to give personal counselling. Advantages of a group discussion are: since the families are all in a similar situation it is easier to start an exchange of views; a mutual fellowship begins, and it may be that contacts remain and even lead to a

common course for parents on baptism.

1.3.4: The pastor will give particular care to the choice of subjects for such a baptismal talk, for this is an ideal opportunity to create contacts

between the congregation and young families, which have often just moved into the area. The starting point of such a talk will normally be the event "birth of a child". That means talking about the new life situation of the family and particularly of the mother. Above all one must talk about the meaning of baptism, also about the choice and the duties of the godparents. In many cases the talk will also touch upon other questions concerning the parents — for example, if they belong to different denominations or have differing backgrounds in church membership — or problems in the family and at work.

It is also necessary to discuss the structure of the baptismal service itself, in order to remove anxiety and uncertainty. It is to be recommended that the parents participate in the choice of readings and hymns. One should also discuss quite practical questions, for example the collection, or whether photographs may be taken during the service. It may also be one of the matters belonging to the baptismal talk that the pastor make suggestions for the form of celebration after the baptism and for the rest of the day. There is also an opportunity to tell the family about the church's activities for parents and children. Finally this talk will also cover the possibilities of religious upbringing and education.

1.4: After the baptismal talk the pastor can give the parents a short booklet about baptism as a reminder.

1.5: It is to be recommended that the pastor is supplied with competent aids for leading the discussion during the baptismal talk. It is important that he/she acts neither like a schoolmaster nor simply like a master of ceremonies. He/she will rather take the parents' request for baptism seriously as an expression of their knowledge of the last instance of dependence and responsibility.

## FEDERATION OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

### Introduction

224. The Lutheran and United churches associated in the Federation of the  
the  
Lutheran Churches in the GDR submit below a joint official  
response to  
(the Lima convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry.  
Such  
a common response is due not least to the process pursued during the  
last  
fifteen years by our churches towards more committed fellowship.  
Adoption  
of the Leuenberg Agreement by the member churches of the  
Federation  
gave unique expression to that process.
225. We welcome the texts sent to us by the WCC as the fruits of intensive  
theological endeavours on the part of the Commission on Faith  
and  
Order on which our churches are also represented — over a  
period of  
some decades. The texts bear witness to an encouraging number of  
shared  
insights and indicate ways in which it is possible to overcome the  
differences  
that separate the churches. Manifestly these texts are not  
merely the  
products of discussions by expert theologians. They are also, and  
primarily,  
the expression of the churches' growing together — in their life  
and in  
spiritual fellowship — as this has been achieved in the ecumenical  
movement  
of the twentieth century.
226. We consider it specially significant that since 1968 theologians of  
the

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Roman Catholic Church have also become members of the Commission on Faith and Order and have taken part in the preparation of the texts. Alongside relations with Orthodox churches and the free churches, which find expression in the Council of Christian Churches, it is our relations

with the Roman Catholic Church, as the largest ecumenical partner in our country, that specially characterize our ecumenical situation. The new ecumenical line taken by the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II has

8 Churches: Evangelical Churches in Berlin Brandenburg of Anhalt, of Greifswald, of the Church Province of Saxony, of the Górlitz Church Territory; Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Thuringia, of Mecklenburg, of Saxony-7,275,000 members, 7,212 parishes, 4,185 pastors.



also had an effect on the ecumenical climate among us. A process has been initiated in which we can increasingly recognize each other as churches and communities founded in Christ. Thus in our situation, special significance might well be attached to the fact that Roman Catholic theologians have shared responsibility for the present documents.

227. We respect the reasons for referring to the following documents as "convergence texts" and not consensus documents. If it is only where the churches are "living and acting together" (preface) that there can be a consensus in the full sense of the term, then the texts under discussion do not yet actually represent a full consensus. We do however hope and pray to God that the "shared convictions and perspectives" arrived at in these convergence texts mark a stage in interchurch relations from which it will soon be possible to take further steps towards visible unity of the churches in full eucharistic fellowship. Subject to certain conditions which will be mentioned later, we would be ready to take such steps.

228. In our churches, the convergence texts have on various levels started a process of reception which has led to (1) questions directed back at the texts,

229. critical questions addressed to ourselves and, finally and especially,

230. new hopes for the visible unity of the church. There were of course problems too in working with these texts, because it was often rather difficult to relate what they said to the questions currently arising here in the life of our congregations, in preaching and in service to human beings. The response framed below is also a product of this reception process. At the same time we would call to mind that our churches had already voted on the earlier version of these texts (Accra, 1974). At some points we can see that the opinions we gave then have been taken into account in the present version of the texts, and we regard this too as an element in the ecumenical

reception process.

6. The four questions addressed to the churches in the preface to the convergence texts were kept in mind at all stages in the reception process, and when we were considering what our decision should be. We should like to cover them in the present response, even if we have not organized our replies directly round them.

We can see the main force of the challenge presented by the texts in the first question: to what extent can our church recognize in the texts the (apostolic) faith. . . through the ages? And the main thrust of our reaction and response also relates to this.

The practical consequences mentioned in the second question, and which our churches wish to draw, relate essentially to the statements made on baptism and the eucharist. They are summarized in the concluding section of the response.

In our response we should like to leave open for the present our reaction to question 3 — on the guidance our churches can take from the texts for their own life — and not give a definitive reply. It is our view that the

appropriate answers can be found only in the "spiritual process of reception", i.e. in the way the congregations take up the texts and use them. This "spiritual reception process" also includes ecumenical renewal and the changing of relations with churches of other confessions, and it will still go on, for years and indeed decades. The replies we give to the fourth question relating to the "ongoing work" are also very fragmentary and basically derive from deficiencies and specific desiderata to which we draw attention in the chapter on the ministry from the standpoint of our own churches, but which we should like to submit as themes for the ongoing discussion. They too are summarized in the concluding section.

231. We relate what is asked in the first question — the extent to which our churches can recognize, or rediscover, in this text the "(apostolic) faith through the ages" — to the apostolic belief in the gospel as fundamentally attested in holy scripture and taken up into the church's teaching and confession of faith. For us this teaching and this confession of faith essentially include also the Lutheran and Reformed confessions of the sixteenth century, which are guides for what we currently confess today. In their self-understanding they represent reformulations of the one faith of the church throughout all the ages and are an enduring gift to the oikoumene.

232. In discussion of the apostolic faith our churches are concerned to distinguish between holy scripture and church tradition.

-In this we are not denying that all churches, including our Reformation churches, live within a context of traditions.

— We see too that all three convergence statements base themselves on the evidences of holy scripture. But they then set forth the "faith of the church through the centuries" pre-eminently as this has presented itself in the course of the churches' life and deposited itself in their traditions. But we see holy scripture not just as an initial basis for the faith we inherit and as something that can be quoted to authenticate it. For us holy scripture also continues to be something confronting our church and traditional faith throughout their evolution. Thus in the witness of scripture we are confronted by the word of God which brings us back from wandering on the wrong track and can renew us. But an ecumenical reformation is taking place: the renewing word of God does not confront us today as an isolated church with a confession of faith — a denomination — but in the challenge of other churches' existence and of ecumenical discussion shared with them.

9. The distinction between scripture and Tradition is important for our churches and enables us to be more open to ecumenical discussion with other churches which with holy scripture also live from the word of God. but witness to the apostolic faith in their own specific tradition and language.

The distinction guides our efforts towards an ecumenical understanding which does not judge other churches simply by whether the teachings of our

own church on the faith can also be found in them, but also tries to see a further expression of the apostolic faith where other churches offer evidence of it from their tradition and in their own (to us unfamiliar) terminology. Such an understanding can be successfully achieved if statements foreign to us can be translated into the language of our own inheritance — if, in fact, the concerns of our own tradition can be recognized in them, or if they can be seen to go back to statements from holy scripture that have been left out of account by our own church.

Seeing the convergence statements as the fruits of this ecumenical discussion— in which there has been sufficient mutual recognition of the representatives of various church traditions for the voices of these traditions to blend in common pronouncements — we are led to receive the texts on a variety of levels ranging from agreement on content and phrasing, through interpretative appropriation to the registering of disagreement; this last being fed back as questions into the ongoing discussion. Frequently we have reacted by agreeing as to content and phrasing and this indicates our readiness to take over what has been said into our own doctrinal heritage. In the case of interpretative appropriation, we have to beware not to accept textual ambiguities deliberately, just for the sake of avoiding conflicts. We consider that it is allowable to appropriate certain things interpretatively, e.g. in ministry §8, provided there remains a clear prospect of other churches likewise carrying out interpretative appropriation for their part. If for all to see the various interpretations of the churches can be so made that in them the churches recognize each other as still apostolic, and do not have to exclude each other as heretical, then quite clearly a shared truth must lie behind them.

The feedback of the disagreement we have registered (e.g. on the basic statement in ministry §22) takes the form of questions for the ongoing discussion, as an indication that we should also like to continue the ecumenical debate in the search for a common approach and discovery of this together with those holding such a view as that mentioned, which we can neither share, nor consider to be in accordance with scripture nor appropriate by interpretation.

### **On the convergence statement on baptism**

#### **1. THE ONE BAPTISM AS A BOND OF UNITY**

We agree with §6 of the convergence statement in seeing "a basic bond of unity" (Eph. 4:3-6) in the "common baptism which links us to Christ in faith". Accord on the meaning of baptism, its being administered only once and its being unrepeatable, and the mutual recognition of the act of baptism are for us the starting point for achieving a clearer expression of unity in Jesus Christ among Christians and their various churches (cf. also §15).

#### **2. REFERENCES TO HOLY SCRIPTURE AND CHURCH TRADITIONS**

It is by referring in its fundamental comments to the New Testament that the convergence statement tries to set forth what baptism means for "the faith of the Church through the ages". Allusions to church traditions in the writings of the church fathers (§1), the liturgy (§2) and the practice of the ancient church (§§19 and 23) indicate possible ways — partly different (cf. the commentaries on §§14 and 18) — of presenting and expounding the basic biblical witness.

We can see a recognition here that holy scripture has precedence over church tradition, but we note too that the way individual scripture passages are used and understood is also determined by church traditions. We shall have to accept that today it is in shared ecumenical discussion with other churches and their traditions that we can discern the renewing word of God in holy scripture.

#### **3. BAPTISM: ITS BASIS AND INSTITUTION**

In §1 the institution of baptism is discussed in general terms which imply not just a single act of institution, but that baptism and what it signifies are founded in the entire history of Jesus Christ: Christian baptism is "rooted" in the ministry of Jesus Christ and in his death and resurrection, and is passed on to the disciples of the church by the commission of the Risen Lord. We welcome this comprehensive view of the institution of baptism and consider it helpful in relation to the difficulties that may appear in the historical quest for an act of institution.

#### **4. THE BASIC STATEMENTS ABOUT BAPTISM**

We can recognize the biblical witness and the corresponding faith of the church in the following basic points of the convergence statement on baptism:

- Christian baptism is rooted in the work of Jesus Christ and in his command to his disciples (§1);
- it is administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (§17);
- it is "an unrepeatable act" (§13);
- it means and conveys "participation in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ" and therefore liberation from the power of sin for a new life (§3);
- it "implies confession of sin and conversion of heart" and has "ethical implications" (§14);
- with it, God bestows "upon all baptized persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit";
- by it, the baptized are incorporated in the one church as the body of Christ (§6);

— it is a sign of the coming kingdom of God and at the same time "initiates . . . the new life in the midst of the present world" (§7). We would stress that Christian baptism presupposes the basic saving event in Jesus Christ. The convergence statement on baptism makes this clear, even though not expressly treating the assumption as a theme on its own, nor reflecting the relation that exists between the saving event and the mediation of salvation. It goes without saying that approval of these basic statements on baptism will for our churches be bound up with whether their baptismal practice and understanding of baptism come sufficiently close to them. Among other things, the convergence statement can provide us with a stimulus towards a stronger expression of the eschatological dynamic of which baptism is part, as "a sign of the kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come" (§7).

#### 5. HOW DIVINE GIFT AND HUMAN RESPONSE ARE RELATED

As our churches understand the biblical witness, there can be no mistaking that God's action and gift come before the human response, and alone make it ultimately possible. If the relation of baptism and faith is to be defined at all (cf. also the next point), we would stress that God's gracious action is prior both to baptism and to faith, and that they both refer back to the saving event that has already taken place in Jesus Christ. Baptism itself makes it plain to us that God acted first and that the faith awakened by God has this as its foundation. God's gift, which is appropriated through baptism, awaits a response from those who receive it, but we cannot fix the moment of that response.

In our tradition the view is deeply rooted that in baptism God is acting on human beings. But from other traditions we shall have still more to learn of the need for discipleship, as something that is lived out, to emerge out of the gift of God that has been received. Different views exist even among ourselves as to the way receiving God's gift becomes a reality during our lives. Yet an ecumenical theology of baptism might be able to show how the interconnection of faith and baptism may be discerned in different chronological stages. It would then be possible to recognize that those differences in views are merely relative in their significance.

In the convergence statement, the biblical witness as taken into our Reformation-type churches' confessions can be recognized in the way the relation between God's gift and human response is defined as regards baptism. Paragraph 1, in which baptism is exclusively described in terms of God's gift, makes clear the primacy of that gift over the human response to it — as do other comments.

The beginning of §8 does, however, give rise to some reservations on our part. There we read: "Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift." But when this equation is made, something different is being said from the affirmation that faith and baptism belong together. Here we must

keep in view the fact that faith itself is in the nature of a gift. We could however affirm the sentence just quoted in the sense that the response belongs to baptism. Such an interpretation suggests itself to us from the further comments in §§8-10 which speak of what follows baptism and of that to which the baptized are called. Here the human response is represented as presupposing the gift of God; not as a factor within baptism itself, but rather as its consequence.

#### 6. ON THE THEOLOGICAL RELATION OF BAPTISM AND FAITH IN THE LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF BAPTISMAL PRACTICE

##### 6.1 *The one baptism in the various forms of baptismal practice*

The convergence statement lets us see the task confronting those working out the doctrine of baptism on account of the various *forms* of baptismal practice. It must be made plain that in these forms baptism itself is nevertheless one and the same. We can discern this aim too in the content of the convergence statement. The terms indicating different forms of baptismal practice appear even more frequently in the German than in the English text (which has "infant baptism" in §11, and "believers' baptism" in the commentary on §12) — thus we find *Kindertaufe*, *Sduglingstaufe* and *Gldubigentaufe*. Yet they may still obscure what baptism actually is, because they can be understood as if they were a description of different *kinds* of baptism, whereas in fact the reference is only to differences on the part of the candidates for baptism and so perhaps in the baptismal practice (unfortunately in the commentary on §12 we read of "*both forms* of baptism" instead of forms of baptismal *practice*). We think it less open to misunderstanding if, as in the English text of §12 ("the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants") the reference is to the baptism of children, infants or believers as the case may be. But even then it seems to us that this way of distinguishing between children and believers as candidates for baptism cannot be wholly sustained, as faith can neither be excluded among children nor, in every instance, demonstrated among adult candidates for baptism. It would be better to speak of the "baptism of catechumens" than of the "baptism of believers" to describe the form of baptismal practice intended. We should also like to avoid the expression "believers' baptism" because it gives the impression that the validity of baptism depends on the faith of the person to be baptized.

##### 6.2 *The significance of the fellowship of believers for the baptizand*

The commentary on §12 sees in the "practice of infant baptism" an indication that the fellowship of the church takes priority over the personal faith of the person to be baptized. We go along with the idea that there is a reciprocal relation between the individual's membership in the body of Christ and the already extant community of the body of Christ. Here we

consider that the differences between us may be regarded as relative if it is asked what emphasis can appropriately be placed on the individual or the community in the administration of baptism.

We cannot accept the idea of a "corporate faith" if this obscures the point that faith is always personal, and if it means that faith is initially the property of a corporate body (the church) rather than of the individual believer who can only later be incorporated in the church.

We think it right to go along with the convergence document in drawing attention to the point that the precondition for baptism being sought and granted is that children (or more generally minors) should have a connection with a fellowship of believers. Baptism is, consequently, appropriately administered within the congregation as it confesses its faith.

### 6.3 *The necessity of faith*

We affirm "the necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism" (§8). By this we do not mean the necessity of prior personal faith for the reception and validity of baptism, but hold rather that "the personal faith of the recipient of baptism and faithful participation in the life of the church are essential for the full fruit of baptism" (commentary on §12). In our view, what matters in baptized persons is not so much simultaneity of the baptismal act and personal faith, as their grateful use throughout the rest of their lives of the gift of God bestowed on them in baptism, and their positive response to the call that sanctifies them. In the convergence statement it seems to us that at times faith is to a great extent made an adjunct of sanctification. From our Reformation standpoint it is seen more as trust in God's promise from which follows the new life in sanctification.

### 6.4 *Problems relating to our churches' baptismal practice and understanding of baptism*

The problems broached in §§11-13 affect our churches not only in relation to other confessions but confront them also in terms of their own situation and theological approach. In our churches' missionary situation it is now more frequent for people to be baptized who have found their way into the church only as adolescents and adults. Although the Lutheran and Reformed confessional statements, in so far as they are accepted in our churches, unambiguously confirmed the practice of child baptism, the question has also been raised, both in the light of this new situation and for fresh theological reasons, whether it can still be a matter of course for parents to bring their children for baptism while they are still infants; and whether, when parents postpone the baptism of their children to help them towards seeking baptism for themselves, their decision should not be expressly respected. There is at present no complete uniformity of views on this among the member churches of the Federation of Evangelical Churches

(BEK) in the GDR. In the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg it is, on the basis of a synodal resolution of 30 April 1981, "held to be equally proper for Christian parents to bring their infant children for baptism or to help them towards deciding on their own to be baptized". In other member churches of BEK, and especially within the orbit of the united Evangelical Lutheran Church, this resolution, which puts both these possibilities on the same level, has come up against reservations, because, if put into practice, it could encourage devaluation of the practice of child baptism. Some member churches therefore continue deliberately to maintain that for children of Christian parents baptism in infancy is to be regarded as the rule.

### 6.5 *Consequences for the life and work of our churches*

The convergence statement is a reminder to our churches of the great responsibility they take upon themselves for "the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ" (§16). Besides the instruction before and after baptism of those respectively seeking baptism or already baptized, we also attach high importance to work with parents and god-parents.

In the responsibility which they share together with other churches for baptism, our churches should shape their baptismal practice to avoid creating the impression that they practise the baptism of children in an "indiscriminate way" (§21, commentary) and this still applies too where there is no longer a parental church connection and Christian education of the baptized children can no longer be expected. In our environment, however, responsibility for the practice of baptism also includes the missionary endeavour to encourage people to be baptized and to believe.

To match the ethical consequences and implications of baptism which are referred to in §10, our churches should continue to look for ways of helping those who have been baptized to recognize their call to witness and to fulfill God's will in all spheres of their lives, and to be able to behave accordingly.

## 7. BAPTISM, CHRISMATION, CONFIRMATION, ADMISSION TO COMMUNION

### 7.1 *Signs of the gift of the Holy Spirit*

As is noted in §§14 and 19, there are in many churches special signs of the gift of the Holy Spirit to the baptized person, e.g. "the anointing with chrism and/or the imposition of hands", also the sign of the cross. We recognize an endeavour in §14 to make it clear that Christian baptism with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit already contains in itself the reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit and does not necessarily have to be supplemented by other (sacramental) actions. But it may well be that the use of such signs (some of which — the imposition of hands and, to an extent, the sign of the cross — are provided for in the baptismal orders of our churches) can be appropriate means for indicating

more plainly what is given in baptism. This also holds good for a confirmation ceremony as a reference back to baptism.

### 7.2 Confirmation in our churches

There is discussion in our churches on the relation to baptism of what we call confirmation, and how confirmation can be ordered so that the fundamental meaning of baptism is not thereby obscured. The question asked is, what further significance if any can a confirmation ceremony add which baptism has not already comprehensively provided? In this discussion it has become clear to us that "non-theological" factors are at work here. We are fundamentally in agreement with the basic presupposition of the convergence statement that baptism, administered once only, opens up the way to participation in Jesus Christ and so concerns the whole course of life of the baptized person. It then seems logical to look critically at confirmation as a supposedly special means of admission to holy communion (cf. the commentary on §14). But right though it is to say that in principle baptism opens up access to holy communion, it would equally be wrong to overlook the part played by a person's age and social circumstances as regards an initial invitation to holy communion at the appropriate time. It will be necessary to go on asking seriously whether there could perhaps be — in the light of what has been mentioned — a special rite between baptism and admission to holy communion.

There can be no simple equation of what is called "confirmation" in our churches with the confirmation in other churches, which is referred to in §14. On the contrary, "confirmation" has a different emphasis and involves the retrospective completion of the baptismal catechumenate, a reminder of baptism, admission to holy communion and a blessing so that the confirmand may be kept in the faith and may grow in it. Confirmation is part of the way in which the baptized person is led within the congregation to mature Christian existence. An attempt is also being made in our churches to dispense with this confirmation of admission to holy communion and open up participation in the celebration of communion to children. Thus in some churches it is possible for children to participate in communion, in accordance with a resolution to that effect by the church authorities (the parish/congregational council) (cf. a resolution in 1976 by the regional synod of Mecklenburg).

### 7.3 Baptism and communion

The convergence document makes it clear that baptism precedes participation in holy communion and "points by its very nature to the eucharistic sharing of Christ's body and blood" (commentary on §14). We consider this definition of the relationship of baptism and communion to be very important and we approve it.

A more comprehensive reflexion on the baptism-communion sequence is made necessary by the problems arising for its practical implementation, where adolescents come and grow into the life and worship of the church without ever having been baptized.

### 8. CLARIFICATION OF THE GENERAL CONVICTION THAT BAPTISM SHOULD TAKE PLACE ONCE ONLY AND BE UNREPEATABLE

We go along with the convergence statement in stressing that actions must be avoided which may call in question the clearness of the generally held conviction that the one baptism can take place once only and is unrepeatable (§13).

As we see it, this must also hold good in relation to attempts which are made to supplement water baptism by a so-called "Spirit baptism". The problem of a Spirit baptism by imposition of hands without using water is tackled in commentary (c) on §21. It is one which also confronts our churches as a result of the attitude of individual groups. We think it appropriate that there should be discussion of this problem area in a special study, as is suggested in the commentary on §21. We maintain that baptism must without fail be administered with water and that it can neither be supplemented nor replaced by any so-called Spirit baptism.

### 9. THE ELEMENTS IN THE BAPTISMAL LITURGY

In §20 the convergence statement provides a classification of elements in the baptismal liturgy. This list and the sentence that introduces it ("Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place") we see as analogous to the list of "elements in varying sequence and of diverse importance" suggested in §27 of the convergence statement on the eucharist. Thus we do not regard the list in §17 as a necessary minimum (as might be suggested by "at least", which is open to misunderstanding), but, as we see it, contains, alongside the absolutely essential elements of the act of baptism mentioned already in §17, others which cannot be binding in this way. Thus for instance, renunciation of evil (*abrenuntiatio*) in our churches, even where provided for in the baptismal liturgies, is not held to be an absolutely necessary element in the act of baptizing. We put great stress on the preaching of the word of God at baptism (cf. §21). We cannot go along with the view of those churches which regard baptism as incomplete without the sealing of the baptized person with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is surprising to find the renunciation of evil included among the elements of the baptismal liturgy since this part of the act of baptism was not dealt with in the sections that preceded. If this possible element of the baptismal liturgy — which is also in our churches' liturgical traditions — is once again to be taken seriously, then guidance is necessary on how this renunciation of evil is to be effected in today's situation. It will have to be

practically related to the social or religious environment from which the candidates for baptism come and in which the power of evil takes on a particular form for them.

The symbolical explanation and enrichment of the act of baptism as indicated in §§18 and 19 must in our view be kept in its place wherever it is more likely to distort than to display the central features of baptism. Thus it is only where there is an initial clear indication of the basic understanding of baptism that one can defend statements about the appropriateness of deducing its cosmic significance from the symbolism of water.

Keeping in mind what has been said on §§18-20 we can also recognize in §20's list of elements for a baptismal liturgy a correspondence between the shape of church baptismal practice outlined here and the biblical witness to baptism.

#### 10. BAPTISM IN PREACHING AND WORSHIP: SUGGESTIONS FOR OUR CHURCHES

To take due note of the connection of baptism "with the corporate life and worship of the church" (§23), our churches should, if they do not already do so, receive the suggestions in §23 for the administration of baptism in public worship and especially on festival occasions; in this way those members of the congregation who are assembled together will also be reminded of their own baptism. This recommended practice corresponds to the basic view of baptism expressed in §6, as uniting us with the Christian community. The question too of the consequences of the practice of child baptism for admission to communion (§14, commentary b) may offer a stimulus to our practice in worship. It is also necessary for the meaning of baptism in the whole life of the congregation to be effectively preached so that its significance for the entire life of Christians can be made plain. There is a suggestion in commentary (c) of §14 which can be helpful here and is already to an extent being practised in our churches: it is that a repeated reminder be given of the fact that baptism has taken place, with, in special services throughout the church's year, an updating of the commitment made in baptism, and a clear indication in the celebration of holy communion of how the latter is linked to the (prior) baptism of those participating.

#### 11. FURTHER PROPOSALS FOR DIALOGUE WITH THE PARTICIPATING CHURCHES

##### 11.1 *The relation between baptism, proclamation and faith*

In the dialogue with the other participating churches, but also worldwide, discussions on the theology of baptism should include consideration of how faith and conversion relate to the word that is preached. The focus in the convergence statements on the two sacraments, baptism and eucharist — however understandable in regard to the differences that are encountered

here between the churches — has relegated the relation between word and faith to the background.

Paragraph 4 states that baptism "implies confession of sin and conversion of heart". Perhaps this can be adequately understood only if it is assumed that those seeking baptism have already been touched by the proclamation of the gospel, which has led to their conversion and encouraged them to confess their sins; or if we are thinking of proclamation to those already baptized. A switch from the baptism-faith relation to that of baptism-proclamation-faith will be particularly necessary where it is desired to strive for understanding between those urging the admission of children to baptism and those supporting "believers' baptism".

##### 11.2 *Baptism and church connection (adherents)*

In the ancient church there was, alongside those already baptized, a wider circle of people listening to preaching and taking part in worship, and, subsequently, of catechumens. Likewise in the conditions of modern secularized society such as our churches are already experiencing, there will be a wider circle already touched and addressed by proclamation and perhaps even involved in church work, but not yet baptized. What the convergence statement says would not be adequate in this situation, or would at least have to be supplemented. This raises the problem of church connection and church membership in relation to baptism (and to proclamation) as a further subject for dialogues.

##### 11.3 *The influence of non-theological factors on baptismal practice*

The convergence statement on baptism takes account of non-theological factors only in one passage — the commentary on §21, relating to customs in the context of non-Christian cultures — whereas one otherwise notices a certain tendency towards an abstract theology of the sacrament. We on the other hand would point to the continuing task of reflecting theologically on the point that ecclesiastical acts may also come to embrace functions in the life of society that are explicable in sociological terms. It is perhaps only in this context, too, that there could be adequate further reflection on baptism, confirmation and first communion (cf. on this what we noted above in our seventh section).

#### **The convergence statement on the eucharist**

##### TOWARDS EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY AMONG THE CHURCHES

We welcome the convergence statement on the eucharist, and trust that it will help towards the unity of Christians at the Lord's table. In our view this unity is essential and central to the community of the churches. The statement helps us to inter-relate the differing emphases in the divided churches' understanding of communion. While safeguarding their own

traditions regarding the faith, the various churches may thus, as we <sup>os</sup> hope, come to know each other better as they partake in the <sup>ty</sup> one <sup>bo</sup> body of Christ, and may accept each other, nurturing and enriching each other in <sup>fy</sup> the development of their worshipping life.

### 1. The Lord's supper as the gift of Christ

The convergence statement tries to describe the Lord's supper <sup>os</sup> theologically and ecclesologically, showing the "faith of the church through <sup>ty</sup> ages" in a diversity of manifestations that are not part and parcel of <sup>ty</sup> Christological focus of our evangelical understanding of communion. According to the statement, this diversity is apparent in the New Testament <sup>ty</sup> tradition of the institution of communion by Christ himself (§1) and the <sup>ty</sup> typological and eschatological character of the Lord's supper as the church's new passover (§§1, 22-26); and also in the liturgical traditions <sup>ty</sup> the Lord's supper as an offering of praise and thanks (eucharistia) of the church for all God's saving works (§§3 and 4), as a memorial of Christ's sacrificial death (§§5-13) and as an invocation (*epiklesis*) of the Holy Spirit who makes Christ present and thus enables the church to be sanctified and <sup>ty</sup> renewed (§§14-18). The ecumenical and social significance of the Lord's supper is also underlined in the statement: Christians sharing in the Lord's supper are one with the whole church (§§19-21). In celebrating the supper <sup>ty</sup> the church participates in God's mission to the world and obtains a foretaste of God's new creation (§§22-26).

These diverse aspects represent an enrichment of our understanding <sup>ty</sup> the Lord's supper provided the introductory comments in the convergence text on communion retain priority. The Reformation view is that in communion Jesus Christ is the giver and at the same time the gift by which <sup>ty</sup> forgiveness of sins and eternal life are bestowed on us. For this reason we would in particular emphasize what is said in the convergence statement <sup>ty</sup> about communion as "a gift from the Lord" (§1) or, "essentially" . . . "the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit" (§2), and that "the assurance of the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28) and the "pledge of eternal life" (John 6:51-58) is granted <sup>ty</sup> each member in the community of the body of Christ (§2).

At the heart of communion are "the words and acts of Christ" (§13), <sup>ty</sup> not the words and ordinances of human beings. Christ has offered himself on the cross as a sacrifice of atonement. He invites us to the supper and <sup>ty</sup> presides at it (§29).

### 2. The description of the Lord's supper as the "eucharist"

It is not normal in our churches' tradition to describe the Lord's supper <sup>ty</sup> the "eucharist", which is the term used almost exclusively in the <sup>ty</sup> <sup>ty</sup>

gence statement. We chiefly use the terms "communion" (*Abendmahl*) or "Lord's supper" (*Herrenmahl*). The pervasive use of "eucharist" in the convergence text is not just for the sake of standardizing terminology (cf. the note in §1 on the various designations for the eucharist). On the contrary it relates to the dominant view of the Lord's supper as the "great thanksgiving" and the "great sacrifice of praise" (§§3 and 4) and that is the view which the term "eucharist" highlights. It is a term which undoubtedly has very ancient and legitimate traditions behind it. And here we should point out that it originates in the description of the great prayer of thanksgiving as the response by the congregation celebrating communion to the great acts of God. Its application was extended from this initial function to cover the whole communion service.

In the light of this understanding of "eucharist" as thanks to God offered up, for us sinners, in Christ on the cross and so pointing to the actual saving event, we can accept the term in the interests of ecumenical discussion.

What we cannot accept, however, is the emphasis on the congregation's offering of praise and thanks as the pre-eminent view of the Lord's supper. For us this view can be an enrichment only where it does not obscure what we consider the essential feature of the Lord's supper, i.e. that as we participate in the supper Christ bestows the forgiveness of sins, which he effected for us by his death on the cross. We find this concern better expressed by the description "Lord's supper".

Attached though we are to the Reformation view of communion we are prepared to make ourselves open to elements from other eucharistic traditions which may be able to help us guard against a constricted individualistic conception of communion, and to bring to the forefront the dimension of love for the entire creation and the expectation of the kingdom of God.

### 3. Communion as word and proclamation

For our churches the emphasis on the inalienable character of communion as word and proclamation (§§3 and 12) is an essential. This must be understood not just as proclamation of the gospel by preaching but also as prayers of thanksgiving and praise, and hymns in the same vein (§§3, 4 and 27). Proclamation and sacrament are not for us gradations of varying valency — both are, rather, ways of accepting and participating in the one full salvation in Christ. We cannot agree unreservedly with the last sentence in §1, that celebration of the eucharist is the "central act of the church's worship". Central to worship is, we consider, the gospel, which we encounter in a variety of ways. We therefore maintain that even worship without communion is fully valid worship, and so we think it legitimate to alternate between preaching and communion services.

Our Reformation tradition too, which is very much characterized by the proclamation of the word, encourages us to receive communion — that "everlasting treasure" "by and in which we obtain forgiveness of sins"

1 Translator's note: The BEK German text explicitly prefers "essentially" to "above all", which occurs in the German version of BEM.



(Luther) — more frequently. We therefore are in accord with the effort mentioned in the convergence text towards celebrating and receiving communion more frequently. But care must be taken to see that no element of compulsion emerges such as would in a different way create a lack of respect for the Lord's supper.

#### 4. *The presence of Christ in communion*

Christ's promise, his self-offering on the cross and his resurrection are the true basis for the real presence of Christ in communion. In our church traditions this real presence is variously described when one gets down to detail. We welcome the opportunity offered in the statement to look on the various descriptions of the mystery of the presence of Christ in communion as converging and not as in mutual, exclusive opposition (§3 and commentary). The Reformation churches in Europe have jointly stated: "In the Lord's supper the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine" (Leuenberg Agreement, paragraphs 15 and 18). The substance of this declaration can be found again in the convergence text (§§2,13 and 14) and also leaves room for the differences that exist among us on this point.

While our churches do not teach any continuance of the presence of Christ in the elements of communion after the celebration, we do agree with the convergence statement that the elements must be treated with care so as not to give offence, and that each church should respect the practices and piety of others (§32).

#### 5. *Anamnesis and sacrifice*

The New Testament witness to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ for us on Golgotha is of special importance for our understanding of communion. While maintaining the unrepeatable nature of Christ's sacrifice, we feel that the convergence text on the representation of Christ's sacrifice in the *anamnesis* (§§6-8 and commentary) is helpful towards finally overcoming the long-standing and passionate controversies about communion as an "atoning sacrifice". In this memorial of Christ his sacrifice accomplished once for all on the cross is a reality, at once present and anticipated, in communion, and is for our benefit.

Of a sacrifice on the part of the congregation, however, we can speak only in the sense that as sinners justified through Christ's sacrifice we offer our whole lives as a living and holy sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1f). This thank-offering of our lives consists in spreading the news of reconciliation with God in Christ by word and deed throughout the world (§§9 and 10).

When the church "offers its intercession in communion with Christ, our . . . High Priest" (§8), this reference to the risen Christ as our high priest makes it wholly clear that he is the mediator on whose continual intercession we rely in our own prayers (§9). Members of the church, who are

themselves constantly in need of grace and the forgiveness of sins by God through his Son's intercession, are in no way a substitute for the interceding Christ when they make their own intercessions for humanity. Here we should like to indicate a limit beyond which we cannot go in our statements: the congregation's intercessions must not be confused with the self-sacrificing intercession of Christ. Our prayers reach God the Father through Christ our Lord.

#### 6. *Epiklesis (asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit)*

The Trinitarian view of the Lord's supper set forth in the convergence text is not usual in the Reformation tradition. The church's prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit in the celebration of the eucharist — the Spirit who brings about the presence of the crucified and risen Christ — is, to be sure, not wholly unfamiliar to our churches, whether Lutheran or Calvinist, yet it is not such a prerequisite for the celebration of communion as the convergence text suggests (cf. §§14-16). It does, however, seem to us that as the convergence text suggests, the petition for the life-creating presence of the Spirit in the celebration of communion is wholly appropriate and is to be commended. Without such petitions, formulae for celebration could be open to misunderstanding. But it is true to say that in our churches there are reservations in particular against the *epiklesis* of gifts in isolation, because of any "theology of transubstantiation" that might possibly lie in this.

In the Reformation view, Christ grants his presence where there is a congregation gathered in the Holy Spirit and asking God for his Spirit. In the petition for the gift of the Spirit, who brings about the presence of the crucified and risen Lord in the eucharist and who renews and sanctifies the congregation, a magical and mechanical misunderstanding of the process of making Christ present is avoided and clear expression is given to the fact that God's gift of grace in Christ is not ours to control (cf. commentary on §14).

Our churches are well-disposed to the idea of opening themselves up more, as the convergence statement suggests, to the pneumatological side of the celebration of communion, and it is their view that a deeper spirituality in our worshipping life may grow out of this. Shared ecumenical study of the range of problems related to *epiklesis* would seem appropriate as a means of clarifying this whole field of thought for our churches. Because of the special Reformation emphasis on the proclamation of the word, we would wish, parallel to this, to think through together in the *oikoumene* the relation of Spirit and word, in association with the range of problems connected with *epiklesis*.

#### 7. *Community of believers*

We lay special stress on the convergence text's statements that communion with Christ present, in the Lord's supper, is "at the same time commun-

ion within the body of Christ which is the Church" (§19). As "the community of God's people is fully manifested" in the eucharist, we are deeply concerned about the divisions between the churches which are — precisely in the eucharist — so plain to see. Here there is a real and vexatious obscuring of the "catholicity of the Eucharist" and so of the church's catholicity or wholeness (cf. §19). In particular we perceive a *skandalon* in the fact that where ecumenical community is intensively experienced, e.g. in marriages of partners belonging to different confessions, or at ecumenical conferences, it has still not been made possible for all to take communion together. The scope for common ecumenical celebrations of the eucharist even at present should be looked into and clearly defined.

Also by way of eliminating sources of separation within our own churches, some churches are admitting baptized children to communion (cf. above, "On the convergence statement on baptism", 7.2). Eucharistic love and care also leads us to giving grape juice instead of wine to those participants in communion whose health might suffer (alcoholics, etc.).

We go along with the convergence text in affirming and stressing the results that could come from eucharistic community — socially, economically and politically, but also affecting denominations (§20). We are "unworthy" of God's gift in communion if, on the strength of that gift, we do not direct our efforts against the persistence of "unjust relationships of all kinds in our society", against unjust distribution of wealth in general and against the "obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions within the body of Christ". In communion we therefore ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that he may give us the power of love, to overcome the divisions in church and world (§20).<sup>2</sup>

#### 8. *Elements of the communion liturgy*

In §27 the convergence statement sets out a series of elements of the eucharistic liturgy. We take this list to be a recommendation, and accept it as such. The individual components, then, could be, as the convergence text also says, in varying sequence and of diverse importance in the service of worship.

Accepting all legitimate local diversity in celebrations of communion, a common basic structure should still be recognizable, so that for visitors from other confessions the celebration of the presence of Christ, and of community in the one Lord, can be comprehensible and they too can participate in it.

<sup>2</sup> In a vote on the convergence statement, the synod of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg puts a particularly high value on the close connection — for which it finds evidence in 1 Cor. 11 — between the eucharist and normal meals taken to satisfy hunger and on the consequence that communion is celebrated not merely at the altar but also in connection with meals taken in houses.

Even if the liturgical riches of other churches prompt us to reappropriate additional components of worship — e.g. the prayer of thanksgiving, the actual *anamnesis* of the saving acts of God in Christ, and the *epiklesis* of the Spirit — we nevertheless regard the simpler forms of Reformation worship through the ages as legitimate and completely valid.

The elements of worship in the various churches should be so arranged and shaped that mutual recognition of common structures is possible, and presuppositions for common services recognized by all can emerge.

#### 9. *Who presides at the Lord's supper*

In our churches the Lord's supper—in agreement with the convergence text — is usually celebrated with ministers presiding who are ordained for the purpose, or also, in special cases, by others duly authorized to do so. The ministry they exercise here points to Christ himself inviting us to the meal and himself presiding at it (§29). In times of need, even members of the congregation who are not ordained must be able, in virtue of the royal priesthood of believers, to undertake the public proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacrament.

#### 10. *Conclusion*

As a matter of principle, our churches are open to extending the hospitality of the eucharist to members of other confessional bodies who accept the text on the eucharist which is at present under discussion. It is our opinion that discussions with these churches should also be held, with intercommunion and intercelebration as the aim; and here, clearly, the question of mutual recognition of ministries arises.

### **The convergence statement on the ministry**

#### 1. **GENERAL APPROACH**

We attach special importance to this section on ministry in the convergence statements since any growth in ecumenical fellowship clearly depends particularly on whether there is a growing greater consensus in the theological understanding of the church's ministry and on our coming closer to the mutual recognition of the existing ministries in the churches.

Compared with baptism and the eucharist, the whole question of the ministry is certainly less important for us theologically. Whereas baptism and the Lord's supper, as sacraments, are directly related to faith even in the Reformation view, only with qualifications can we regard the ministry as a question with a bearing on faith.

Certainly the ministry entrusted with the preaching of the gospel and administering the sacraments rests on the divine commission, but is left to human responsibility as to its form, and so is part of the realm of church order and discipline. The historically developed forms of ministry must

indeed be measured against the divine commission but they cannot be traced directly back to an act of institution on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ. This view of ministry enables us to accept that a different form of the ministry in other churches can be an expression of their obedience to the church's Lord and to recognize them as such.

In our view, the ministries in all the churches, their certainty of their role and their involvement in the one church of Jesus Christ will be enhanced if the churches achieve complete community in fellowship, which includes the mutual granting of eucharistic koinonia and the mutual recognition of their ministries.

## 2. THE CALLING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD AND THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

We emphatically endorse the account of the life and calling of the church in terms of the Trinitarian communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in §§1-5.

This calling of the whole people of God constitutes the basis for the development of a special ordained ministry. In our view, therefore, responsibility for the true preaching of the gospel, for the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper in accordance with scripture, for the leadership of the congregation and the unity of the church, is assigned not to this ordained ministry alone (which is the impression repeatedly given in other parts of the convergence statement) but to the whole people of God. According to our understanding of the approach in §§1-5, therefore, it is not enough when reference is also made in §26, merely as a tail-piece to the fundamental responsibility of the ordained ministry, to the "communal" dimension of the exercise of this ministry, and to "the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit".

It is in keeping with our own tradition that the calling of the people of God is so clearly described as mission (e.g. in §4). This mission to the world should also be clearly worked out in the description of "the chief responsibility of the ordained ministry" (§13) so as to avoid the misconception that the fundamental concern of the holder of this office is only with the baptized members of the community.

We are grateful that, in avoidance of an unbiblical and unrealistic extravagance of approach, the support of the people of God for a better and more humane ordering of the world is brought into alignment with the kingdom of God, in which alone all things are fulfilled (cf. §4).

## 3. THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST ON WHICH THE CHURCH IS FOUNDED . . . AND THE MINISTRY

We consider §8 as particularly important since it raises the question of what is "constitutive for the life and witness" of the church. The churches are agreed that the sole and unique foundation of the church is the redemptive work of the crucified and risen Lord. The ministry, therefore,

which points to this redemptive work is necessary and essential ("constitutive") for the life and witness of the church but without being itself its basis ("constitutive" in the sense of "fundamental".) At all events that is how we prefer to interpret the wording of §8 in keeping with our own tradition. Understood in this way, the ministry has a ministerial role on behalf of the message of Jesus Christ and faith in him and is therefore defined ("constituted") by the message entrusted to it — not vice versa.

We endorse the statement that, in order to fulfill its mission, the church needs persons who are publicly and permanently responsible for pointing out the basic dependence of the church on Jesus Christ (§8) if this is meant to indicate that, within the framework of the mission entrusted to the whole people of God, ordained ministers have a special responsibility for maintaining the apostolic tradition and the unity of the church.

## 4. THE REPRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

We agree with the statements in §§11-13 in the sense that the ordained ministry is defined by its functions in the service of the community and not, for example, by qualities which distinguish ordained ministers *in esse* from non-ordained persons. The description of ordained ministers in §11 as "representatives of Jesus Christ to the community" (German version: *gegenüber der Gemeinde* = "towards" or "over against" the community) is therefore to be related strictly to their function as "heralds and ambassadors" (§11) in the proclamation of reconciliation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). As we see it, however, this ambassadorial function is also entrusted to every non-ordained member of the people of God whenever, in the service of Jesus Christ, it enables others to hear the word of the Lord and helps them to salvation and reconciliation.

In their ministry for the community, ordained ministers remain members of the community and "can fulfill their calling only in and for the community" (§12). They too, like the other members of the community, are justified sinners who need the "help and critical support also of the non-ordained members of the congregation and must listen to the voice of Christ as it becomes discernible in that help and support — for the very reason, too, that they are expected to set "an example of holiness and loving concern" (§12).

## 5. THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

The text and commentary of §17 seek to explain the meaning of the term "priest" starting from the idea that Jesus Christ is "the unique priest of the new covenant". That we can endorse. The "priesthood of all baptized persons" was emphasized in our tradition from the very beginning. Even the explanation given in §17 of the designation of ordained ministers as "priests", which is important for other traditions, can be accepted by us in this form as a clarification of a term often disputed and open to mis-

understanding in the past. This endorsement is also made possible for us by the interpretation of the sacrificial character of the eucharist in the convergence document as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving as well as by the fact that various bilateral conversations have helped the churches of the Reformation tradition to a more nuanced position. We do not interpret the "particular priestly service" referred to in §17 as a unique responsibility of ordained ministers to strengthen and encourage Christians in the exercise of their priestly task.

The mission of the church can only be fulfilled by non-ordained and ordained Christians acting together. Hence our concern that the "royal and prophetic priesthood of believers" should be more clearly brought out. The importance of the contribution made to the further life of the body of Christ by all its members can, for example, become visible in the ordering of the eucharistic celebration (§13 commentary). When reference is made to the "collegial" exercise of the ordained ministry (§26), collegiality is not to be understood to signify exclusively fellowship among the ordained but must also embrace the communal ministry of ordained and non-ordained, as for example, in the leadership of the church or in the proclamation of the word of God. Finally, it will then be impossible to define the prophetic charism merely as an occasional exception ("there have *been times when*. . .") and an "unusual way", as is done in §33; on the contrary, this charism, as a means of renewal through the Holy Spirit, will have to be related in a sustained way to the ministry, which is concerned about continuity.

We do fully realize that anxiety to avoid an unbiblical distinction between the "ministry" and the "laity" can give rise to another danger: that of failing to see and to take seriously the special responsibility of each calling. To this extent, therefore, study of the convergence document on the ministry can result, in our view, in a clearer understanding of the work of the ordained minister and also in a clarification and reinforcement of the special responsibility of the non-ordained church member.

#### 6. THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY AND THE VARIETY OF MINISTRIES

We agree with §19 that the evidence of the New Testament does not permit us to insist on a *single* pattern of ministry as obligatory. We welcome, therefore, the recommendation made in the commentary to §11 that the churches should "avoid attributing their particular forms of the ordained ministry" (which "have evolved in complex historical developments") "directly to the will and institution of Jesus Christ". These statements of the convergence document correspond to those of the Accra text, *One Baptism, One Eucharist and a Mutually Recognized Ministry*, 1975, though the latter presents them with greater consistency (cf. Accra, "One Ministry", §25: "within the same community of faith it is possible to have, side by side, various styles of ecclesial life and ministerial structures, without making the

"threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon" (§19) is regarded as the basic and universally appropriate pattern of ministry in a way that was not yet so in Accra, and "as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it" (§22). The high status of this basic structure for the ministry is not demonstrated from the New Testament but from a tradition which begins in the ancient church. Here we have to register our misgivings and questions:

- The convergence document brings it home to us afresh that in the ecumenical movement we come into contact with other churches which see in the presence specifically of this developed form of ministry an integral element in the church as it progresses towards greater unity. In our view, however, agreement on a particular pattern of ministry is not in fact necessary for the unity of the church.
- The statements made about the threefold ministry in §§19-22 give rise to misgivings in our churches because they could encourage hierarchical tendencies. Granting that this is not the intention of the convergence statement, the latter pays too little heed to this problem and fails to remove such misgivings.

In view of our Protestant dependence on scripture, we also have misgivings about the tendency, discernible in §19 and §22, to assign priority to later developments in the church in the establishment of the

pattern of ministry.

- Another ground for our misgivings about the concept of a basic threefold pattern of ministry is in particular that this concept can lead to a curtailment and limitation of the variety of ministries. This can happen, too, both as to the wealth of gifts and services referred to in the New Testament (Rom. 12 and 1 Cor. 12) and the variety of services and ministries found today in our own and in other churches (for example, catechists and others in the ministry of preaching, church musicians, women parish assistants, etc.). Acceptance of the threefold basic structure of ministry would perhaps be helped forward if the point of this threefold pattern is merely to indicate a framework in which the various ministries in the *episkope*, in the individual communities and in the many forms of proclamation, are bound together and inter-related. But the question remains, whether extremely disparate ministries and services are not being assigned to the diaconal ministry in a way unwarranted by the circumstances (cf. §31).

In our opinion, in the statements of the convergence document on the threefold pattern of ministry we have reached a point where the differences between the churches and their views of ministry are still so considerable that a longer and more intensive discussion is still needed before possible practical steps can be taken. In this discussion, which must also be conducted from the standpoint of the relationship between scripture and tradition, the connection between the three forms of the ministry will need to be

clarified more biblically, more completely and more precisely than has happened up to the present, judging from the statements so far made and the contemporary practice of the churches with this kind of threefold pattern of ministry. The comments about the functions of the threefold ministry in §§28-31 are only "offered in a tentative way" even by the convergence statement itself (§28).

One matter which we have in mind, and which must also be tackled in interchurch discussions is the question of which ministries require ordination and what other forms of accreditation, blessing or commissioning are appropriate for the ministries in question. To be examined in a further discussion is the question whether the union of many different functions within the diaconate may serve to enhance these functions or is on the contrary a handicap to them.

#### 7. THE THREE ASPECTS OF THE EXERCISE OF THE MINISTRY

We welcome the fact that §§26-27, by the adoption of a recommendation 3f the first world Faith and Order conference in Lausanne in 1927 (cf. §26 ;ommentary), emphasize and correlate the three aspects of the exercise of church ministries: personal, collegial and communal. It is our hope that any over-emphasis on or suppression of one or other of these aspects in the churches for historical reasons will be corrected within the ecumenical fellowship and that this correction will be not only of benefit to the church concerned but also advantageous for the growth of ecumenical fellowship.

In our own case, we regard it as an unsatisfactory state of affairs that our theological reflections on the ministry of episkope have so far failed to produce any final result. The statements of the convergence document will be a stimulus to further intensive reflection on our part. In our churches, the ministry of episkope is exercised collegially and communally, by synods and parish church councils, as well as personally — though not exclusively — by bishops (and office-bearers with a comparable function). We recognize the task of clearly defining and coordinating, in keeping with our understanding of the nature of the church, the synodal ministry and the episcopal office, which in the wake of historical developments has been reintroduced by an increasing number of Reformation churches. The historical experiences and theological statements of other churches, even if not directly transferable, help us to develop the three aspects of the ministries of the church in our own way.

In accordance with the priesthood of all believers, the leadership of the church (episkope) is exercised by ordained and non-ordained church members together, communally. We consider §27 inadequate since it deals only with the constitutional or canonical exercise of the ordained ministry.

It is fundamental in Protestant church order to entrust responsibility for spiritual leadership to the non-ordained, at congregational level as congregational

ational representatives, and also in the synods, where the congregations of a region or *land* are involved together.

#### 8. APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND EPISCOPAL SUCCESSION

In part IV of the convergence statement (§34-38, "Succession in the Apostolic Tradition"), a distinction is made between the primary continuity of the entire church in the apostolic tradition, on the one hand, and the succession of the apostolic ministry, on the other. The latter takes place as an orderly transmission within the apostolic church and can take the form of episcopal succession. We regard this distinction, which corresponds to the credal affirmation of the church's apostolicity, as a great gain in the continuing ecumenical dialogue. This distinction makes it possible to recognize that a continuity in the apostolic faith has been preserved even in those churches which have not retained the historic episcopate (§37) and clearly shows that an episcopal succession on its own is no guarantee of the apostolic continuity and unity of the church (§38). Both these insights correspond to the biblical evidence and to the historical experiences of our tradition.

For our churches, on the basis of our understanding of the apostolicity of the church, the maintenance of continuity in the apostolic tradition by fidelity to holy scripture has absolute priority over the historical forms in which there has been orderly transmission of the ministry. Naturally, we also regard it as a special task of the ministry, as a pastoral service, to preserve and to promote the apostolic continuity and unity of the universal church.

Different views are held in our churches as to the episcopal succession, even when the latter is understood as no more than a sign that points to something else. In our opinion, this question still needs very careful consideration within the context of the discussion on the mutual recognition of ministries. Care must be taken here to ensure that any possible adoption of the sign of episcopal succession in no way implies for the churches concerned any devaluation or even invalidation of their traditional ministries, theologically, canonically or liturgically. We see no possibility whatever of accepting the adoption of this sign as the condition for recognition of our ministry.

#### 9. THE MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF (ORDAINED) MINISTRIES

We welcome the clear emphasis on the indispensability of the mutual recognition of ministries and the clear summons to the churches to "deliberate efforts" in this direction (§51). In our view, all the churches should acknowledge that their ministries fall short of their responsibility for the unity and up-building of the one body of Christ as long as the churches are not in complete and reciprocally granted eucharistic fellowship.

We reaffirm our readiness, already demonstrated in practice, to recognize the ministries of other churches in so far as it is clear that the present ministries, in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, serve the redemptive work of Jesus Christ which is constitutive for the church.

We can interpret the statement that the churches "must be prepared to renew their understanding and their practice of the ordained ministry" (§51) only as referring to *all* the churches. The point and purpose of the dialogue on the ministry remains the mutual recognition of the ministries of all the churches, thus establishing their integrity. This implies not just a change in theological statements and canonical definitions but also a spiritual process as an "act of repentance and renewed authenticity" for all.

## 10. ORDINATION

### 10.1 *The act of ordination*

In the account given of the meaning of ordination (§§39ff.) we recognize the essentials of the understanding of ordination in the tradition fashioned by the Reformation (with *vocatio, benedictio, missio*). In our opinion, however, a clearer interpretation is needed of the statement that the act of ordination is a (sacramental) sign (§41 and §43b). The imposition of hands in ordination is not universally regarded as absolutely indispensable in our churches (i.e. as required by the New Testament). When it is called "the sign of the gift of the Spirit" (§39), we interpret this in the light of what is said in §43 about the epicletic character of ordination: the sign points to the promise of the Spirit for the fulfilment of which the congregation prays, trusting in God's faithfulness.

We emphasize the cooperation of the community in ordination, as expressed for example in §41 where ordination is set in the context of worship ("ordination as an act of the whole community").

### 10.2 *The ordination of women*

We emphatically endorse the recommendation made in the commentary to §18 that the question of the ordination of women should be discussed between the different churches and traditions in further joint study and reflection. We attach special importance here to the necessity of distinguishing clearly between theological and so-called non-theological factors (historical, cultural, contextual), of respecting their different status and of reflecting on their correlation.

In our churches, after thorough theological discussions and on mature reflection, we have decided in favour of the ordination of women without any restrictions whatever. We have come to realize that God has conferred on women gifts which, in the interests of the whole people of God, should not be excluded from the service of the ordained ministry. We are ready to

contribute to the discussion of these questions our own spiritual insights and positive experiences.

In our view, each church should assume responsibility for deciding this question in keeping with its own theological tradition and its own historical and cultural development, and this decision (for the ordination of women or excluding it) should be respected by the other churches in such a way that it does not present any obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries (§54).

In practice, this means that even in ecumenical meetings there must be no discrimination against women ordained to the ministry in comparison with men having the same calling and commission.

### 10.3 *Preparation for the exercise of the ministry*

We note the convergence document's reminder on the responsibility of our churches for the appropriate preparation of those who are to exercise the ordained ministry. We underline in particular the references to prayer and spirituality (§47).

## 11. PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS

In addition to the suggestions for further discussions already made in section 6 (threefold ministry), section 8 (episcopal succession) and section 10.2 (ordination of women), we also offer a few suggestions for discussion on themes not yet tackled in the convergence statement but needing consideration in the process towards ecumenical agreement when the ministry is under discussion.

### 11.1 *The primacy of the bishop of Rome*

The ministry/office of the bishop of Rome is not discussed at all in the convergence statement on the ministry. In our view, this question cannot be indefinitely omitted from theological discussion on the ministry of church leadership, since reflection on the universal unity of this ministry, which recognizes its special responsibility for the service of unity, necessarily comes into consideration. The arguments advanced to justify the prominence attached to this ministry/office are of such importance, as are also its legal and practical consequences, that the question of the mutual recognition of ministries cannot be discussed, at least not in the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, without bringing up the question of the papal primacy.

### 11.2 *The teaching ministry and doctrinal authority (cf. magisterium)*

The question of the teaching ministry and of doctrinal authority is discussed in the convergence statement on the ministry either not at all or only indirectly and allusively (§16). Since, however, this question, notwithstanding the fundamental inclusion of all churches in the doctrinal witness of the whole church, has been decided differently in the different

churches and since this produces serious obstacles to the growth towards unity and the mutual recognition of ministries, we consider it (sc. this question) an important theme for dialogue.

The following points appear to us to need special attention:

- In churches in which doctrinal authority is not attached to a distinctive personal office, how is this authority exercised in a collegial or communal way, for example, by synods or executive church bodies?
- Are churches which have a personal pattern of doctrinal authority able to accept the fact that the teaching ministry is not tied to the ordained ministry in the Reformation tradition?
- What are the implications of such a difference in the way the teaching ministry is exercised (personally, collegially, communally) for the reception of consensus documents?
- How is the significance of the reception of doctrinal statements by the community to be defined and what is to be said about the community's competence to judge questions of doctrine?
- How are we to define the relationship between academic theologians and ordained ministers in leadership roles at the local level?
- Is infallibility to be attributed to the church or to a teaching ministry representing the church?

### *11.3 Far-reaching changes in the understanding of the ministry today*

One factor which is of importance in connection with the need to undertake reform in the ministries of all churches as noted in §51 but which is not reflected at all in the convergence document, is the crisis in which the ordained ministry finds itself today in the world and in the church. In our view, this factor is an indispensable part of every discussion on the ministry. In the context of radical changes, intellectual and social, throughout the world, all churches have been affected, albeit diversely, by a certain lack of assurance as to the understanding and practical exercise of the ordained ministry. There is a questioning, or even denial, of traditional authority and authenticity. Ministers themselves are not only vulnerable to challenges of this sort presented to them from outside, but suffer even more from lack of assurance, or a loss of a certainty as to the significance and shape of their ministry, which nevertheless seems quite indispensable for the practice of that ministry. Far from being solved, these problems are made even worse by a widely observable refusal to acknowledge the reality of this situation or by an administrative rigidity. This leads to open or latent fatalism.

It is our impression that these realities are not taken account of at all in the convergence statement and that, on the contrary, it projects an ideal picture based on theological assumptions and making a selective use of historical experiences. This ideal picture could make it even harder for the churches to fulfill the common task to which the document refers — namely, to proclaim the gospel with authority and to practise it in our lives so that

the world may come to believe it — and it could also be a considerable obstacle to the reception of this statement on the ministry in churches which are aware of this crisis and are reflecting on it.

### **Summary of our response on the significance and reception of the three convergence statements**

The convergence statements have again shown us the increased independence and diversity of the churches. The visible unity we seek undoubtedly demands changes in the churches' relations with one another and, ultimately, it is Jesus Christ who calls and guides us into such changes. Yet even within the growing ecumenical fellowship differences remain to be respected and the conversation between independent traditions goes on.

This is specially noticeable in the statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry. It is clear to us that an effort had to be made to find the common central ground for the different churches and to formulate it in a way that would let it be seen as sufficient for the goal of eucharistic fellowship. We accept that the statements contain elements of traditions which are unfamiliar to us and that central concerns of our own Reformation tradition are touched on only marginally, while certain of the wishes expressed by our tradition have been left open.

It is precisely the fact that common ecumenical statements have been built up from different traditions that has led us to adopt the differentiated forms of reception as described in the introduction.

The convergence statements have given our Reformation tradition new frames of reference. We see this too as a new development amounting in importance to an ecumenical Reformation. It implies a shift in the Reformation churches' understanding and definition of their own identity, in that whereas they have hitherto considered it essential to see themselves as distinct from and contrasting with the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations, all that is changing in the ecumenical framework, and they can recognize fraternal relations and fellowship with other churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, as an essential mark of their own church.

### **1. TO WHAT EXTENT CAN OUR CHURCHES RECOGNIZE IN THIS TEXT THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH THROUGH THE AGES?**

On the basis of the reactions from our churches in the last few years, we are thankfully able, in our response to the convergence texts, to express our general agreement: We can recognize the present texts on baptism, eucharist and ministry as a testimony to the Christian, apostolic faith, in accordance with holy scripture. Even though certain critical voices have been heard, from fellow Christians in our church or in the churches with whom we have links in the council of Christian churches, and with whom we wish to continue the dialogue, we stand by our general overall agreement.



This opinion also holds even though, for us, reception of the convergence statements is possible only in the differentiated forms we described in our introduction (number 9). This does not mean, however, that we are able to give no more than hesitant general agreement in face of the objections and reservations that have been expressed. On the contrary, we express our overall agreement with deep gratitude. We are grateful for this fruit which has grown out of an ecumenical discussion which, three generations ago, our church could not have dared to envisage. And we are particularly grateful that these texts do not simply tolerate and align differing stand-points side by side, but have managed to amalgamate statements from different traditions into a common declaration (baptism, eucharist and ministry).

2. WHAT CONSEQUENCES CAN OUR CHURCH DRAW FROM THIS TEXT FOR ITS RELATIONS AND DIALOGUES WITH OTHER CHURCHES, PARTICULARLY WITH THOSE CHURCHES WHICH ALSO RECOGNIZE THE TEXT AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH?

Our general agreement with the statements has implications for us. We would wish our relations with the other churches which recognize the texts as an expression of the Christian, apostolic faith to be such that they also express mutual recognition of the administration of baptism and allow reciprocal recognition of the legitimacy of our respective ministries, and eucharistic fellowship.

### 2.1 *Baptism*

In regard to those churches which likewise recognize the convergence statement as an expression of the apostolic faith with which they agree, we declare our readiness to recognize the baptism administered by them. Following the painful experience of controversy surrounding so-called "second baptism" our willingness here concerns in particular our relation with churches and communities which traditionally baptize people only on a personal confession of faith and express wish for baptism, and recognize only that practice as true baptism. We — who practise infant and child baptism, although we do also have adult baptism in our congregations and recognize its place — expect that those churches, if they agree to the convergence statements, will recognize our baptizing of children and infants as true baptism.

### 2.2 *Eucharist*

With those churches which also recognize the convergence text on the eucharist as attesting the Christian, apostolic faith, our church would like to hold conversations, with a view to mutual recognition of the celebration of the eucharist and, ultimately, intercommunion and intercelebration.

In regard to churches for which such recognition is still impossible we are ready for our part, as a first step in that direction, to offer and receive

eucharistic hospitality. This would mean offering fellowship to members of other churches, including participation in our celebrations of the Lord's supper, and encouraging our members to do the same where other churches grant them fellowship.

In the light of our understanding of the Lord's supper, according to which it is Christ who invites us to the table and offers himself and his salvation to all members of his community who seek him, eucharistic hospitality is in principle possible. We would, however, wish to hold a preliminary conversation with other churches to avoid creating any misunderstandings and possible new ecumenical tensions by unilateral statements.

We assume that, in this era of ecumenical renewal, members of our church, and of other churches, will already have had occasion because of their own direct experiences of ecumenical fellowship, for instance through marriage to a partner of another confession, or other circumstances in their lives, encounters, attendance at ecumenical conferences, to seek and receive Christ the Lord in another church's celebration of the eucharist.

The considerations concerning eucharistic hospitality in our churches are an attempt to take proper account of this experience.

### 2.3 *Ministry*

We find it difficult and, indeed, in the present situation impossible to draw any practical conclusions from the chapter on ministry.

On the one hand, we have hitherto been able in any case to recognize ministries in other churches when they are attested by the gospel and when baptism and the Lord's supper are administered and celebrated according to scripture. On the other hand, we cannot adopt the sign of the apostolic succession simply to make recognition of our ministries possible, because we do not see the legitimacy of our ministries as grounded on that sign, and to do so would possibly devalue the ministries of our churches hitherto.

On the chapter on ministry as it stands at present we may say the following:

- We welcome and again emphasize the fact that:
  - the starting point for any agreement on the ordained ministry is the calling of the whole people of God;
  - that the rich diversity of ministries attested by scripture, going far beyond the threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, is kept in sight (§32);
  - that it is acknowledged that, in the history of the churches, renewal has been brought about by the action of God's Spirit without the threefold ministry, through other charisms and ministries, and the same can always happen again (§33);
  - above all, it is as an ecumenical gain and a mark of progress towards reciprocal recognition that we welcome the distinction drawn between the apostolicity of the whole church, and apostolic succession (§34).

We are encouraged by the steps towards agreement already achieved and would like to continue the conversation on the reciprocal recognition of ministries, so that we can identify and take the necessary steps in that direction.

3. WHAT GUIDANCE CAN OUR CHURCHES TAKE FROM THIS TEXT FOR THEIR WORSHIP, EDUCATIONAL, ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE AND WITNESS?

We are unable at this stage to give a full answer to this third question. In our view, only as the convergence statements are taken up by our congregations (and the different levels of our church life) in the course of the spiritual reception process, will it become clear where and how they offer helpful guidance. In fact, our churches are themselves being changed in the spiritual reception process and, as it goes on, they will themselves identify what makes the path of ecumenical renewal clearer for them and helps them to follow it more easily.

One thing can, however, be said at this point: since our Reformation churches, and their self-understanding, are being renewed in the framework of ecumenical fellowship and they are beginning to define themselves differently in relation to other confessions, we cannot and must not in our understanding and practice of baptism, eucharist and ministry fall back into the attitude of an isolated denominational church, as though Christ had ordained a different way for our church — a way that bypasses awareness of our ecumenical sister churches and our fellowship with them.

4. WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN OUR CHURCHES MAKE FOR THE ONGOING WORK OF FAITH AND ORDER AS IT RELATES THE MATERIAL OF THIS TEXT ON BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY TO ITS LONG-RANGE RESEARCH PROJECT "TOWARDS THE COMMON EXPRESSION OF THE APOSTOLIC FAITH TO DAY?"

In answering this question we list such further tasks for the work of Faith and Order and its contribution to the ecumenical progress of the churches as derive from our reply to the statements.

We think it necessary to include in interchurch dialogue those questions mentioned at the appropriate points in this response. This also holds good where dialogue is going to be conducted to an ever greater extent within a fellowship of churches which give each other mutual recognition, whether partially or conditionally or completely.

In our view, a special concern of this continuing discussion, which we seek in the interests of mutual understanding, is the clarification of the questions on the ministry: — There must be clarification of what the sign of episcopal succession

means for the legitimacy of what takes place in the church through the agency of the various ministries and services.

- There must be clarification in these and other respects of the relation to the "Petrine office" exercised by the bishop of Rome.
- There must be clarification of what follows from the calling of the whole people of God. This has not yet been brought out in the convergence statement. In our view it includes lay elders' sharing of responsibility in synodal church government.
- There must be clarification of what is meant by the need for reform in all ministries, and of how far the orders of ministry and service that have come into being are open to reform through the renewing word of God in the witness of scripture, a witness which can offer scope for a greater wealth of legitimate ministries and services than appears in the threefold ministry.

It is an open question among us how far these BEM texts already afford opportunities or models for a "common expression of the apostolic faith today".

5. All in all we have found the convergence statements ecumenically heartening. Enrichment through ecumenical relations is welcome in all our churches. We are on the road to learning ecumenical solidarity with its sharing in the burdens, commitment and struggles of the other churches.

For years, however, there has been growing scepticism about progress towards visible unity which includes eucharistic fellowship. Against this background, the convergence statements, as an intermediate stage, encourage us to consider further steps and stages towards visible unity to be a possibility, and to seek them and follow them out.

Session 102 of the Conference of Evangelical Church Leaders in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Berlin, 10-11 January 1986

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES CONVERGENCE STATEMENTS ON "BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY" (BEM)

The conference resolved:

- 233. The conference notes that all the members have adopted the statement of the member churches of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR. This statement thereby becomes a joint response of the member churches of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR.
- 234. The resolutions and votes of the member churches are submitted through the Federation to the World Council of Churches along with the joint response. They form an integral part of it.
- 235. The conference expresses its pleasure and gratitude for the fact that

it  
has been possible to speak with one voice on these essential  
questions of  
faith by means of the intensive process of reception in the governing  
bodies

of the member churches. The conference thanks all who took part in this process and expresses the hope that the process of reception will continue at every level in our churches and lead to a convergence within our churches as well as in the worldwide oikoumene.

*The Evangelical Church of Anhalt*

Motion of the Synod's Theological Commission to the Church Committee on 9 October 1985:

1. The synod of the Evangelical Church of Anhalt voted in its resolution of 16 November 1984 agreeing in essentials with the position adopted by the Federation.

Certain comments were highlighted and desires for modification expressed.

2. The Synod's theological commission had at its disposal a draft response of the Federation, dated 11 April 1985. This was a thorough reworking of the member churches' responses.

It was pleased to note that the special concerns of the reformers were brought out still more clearly and relevantly, but also in a way that is open to dialogue and convergence. Especially welcome is the identification of the hopes and questions on which more work has to be done.

The theological commission compared the member churches' statement with the synod's resolution and noted that it had taken account of our misgivings and incorporated reference to our special concerns.

3. The synod's theological commission recommends to the church committee that under §69 lb of the constitution it propose:

The response of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR to the document "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" is ratified as the joint official response of the Evangelical Church of Anhalt.

The church committee unanimously adopted the resolution proposed in item 3 on 22 November 1985.

*The Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg*

To produce a response to the ecumenical statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry, the church's governing body appointed a working party made up of representatives of three standing committees of synod (community, liturgy and theology) and members of the governing body. This working party, in agreement with the aforesaid synod committees, advised the governing body to give their respective reactions to the drafts for a joint response by the members of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR. On this basis the governing body resolved on 18 October 1985 that:

1. The Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg endorses in principle the revised version of the response of the member churches of the Feder-

ation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR to the World Council of Churches document, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry". It notes that queries of material importance which were raised when it voted on 16 November 1984 have been taken up and made use of in it.

2. Despite this basic agreement, it thinks it worthwhile to point out some weaknesses in the wording and to express some positions that diverge from the joint response.

2.1. A more precise wording would be needed on the following points:

236.P. 8 on para. 6.3.: The comment that in the document faith *seems* to us to be at times strongly linked to sanctification is, in view of the basic problem of theological principle which lies behind this, too weakly stated. We would have liked to express the character of faith as a gift more strongly.

237.P. 27, on para. 4, bottom: We think it necessary to be careful to speak *of sisters* and brothers. We leave it to those concerned to frame the draft text more clearly or word it more precisely as the circumstances require.

238. The last paragraph of 10.2 (p. 25) would be better in an affirmative form: "In concrete terms this means that at ecumenical meetings women too should be recognized as members of the ordained ministry, so that they can exercise the functions of their ministry."

2.2. On the following parts of the joint response the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg holds a divergent opinion:

239.P. 9, para. 7.1.: We would draw attention to the failure to mention one problem in this context, viz. how mutual recognition of baptism is to be understood if, when someone goes over to one of the Orthodox churches, chrismation is administered. Our impression is that this practice implies for the Orthodox churches that baptism in our Reformation churches is not fully valid.

240.P. 22, para. 7.: The ECBB cannot endorse the judgment offered in para. 2 that what is said in the document provides a positive stimulus for our theological reflection on the function of episkope.

241.P. 23, para. 8.: For the ECBB "a possible adoption of the sign of episcopal succession" is not open to discussion.

242.P. 24, para. 10.1.: The ECBB believes that any comments must be avoided that even only by implication approximate ordination to a sacrament. It thinks that the reference to the act of ordination

as a  
(sacramental) sign cannot be interpreted in any greater detail and  
there  
fore thinks it inappropriate to ask for "a clearer interpretation".  
243. On p. 28 top: We cannot say so sweepingly that "we are  
thankfully  
able. . . to express our general agreement". The expression  
"general  
agreement" may stand for the texts on baptism and the  
eucharist but  
cannot be applied without qualification to the treatment of the  
"minis  
try".

3. The document is seen by the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg as an encouragement to take further steps on the way we have been going — as an intermediate stage on a journey that still goes on.

*The Evangelical Church of Greifswald*

On the basis of a vote of the theological commission of the *Land* synod, the governing body has approved the joint response of the member churches of the Federation.

The synod was informed of this vote of approval at its autumn session.

*The Evangelical Church of the Church Region of Gorlitz*

The church's governing body passed the following resolution at its session on 22 October 1985:

The governing body of the Evangelical Church of the Church Region of Gorlitz, by authority of the synod, resolves as follows on the response of the member churches of the Federation to the convergence document, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", on the basis of the theological-liturgical commission's summary of the reports from- the synodal committees:

We agree in principle with the part of the response dealing with "Baptism".

- 244. With it we emphasize especially that baptism is once for all and unrepeatable and that as the fundamental basis for the churches' growing more closely together there must be mutual recognition of baptism.
- 245. That God's action is antecedent to any human act must be clearly discernible in preaching, teaching and the practice of baptism. In our view this is most clearly expressed in infant baptism. This does not, however, mean any devaluation of believer's baptism.
- 246. We take the view that what 6.5 of the response calls missionary activities which are an encouragement to have faith and be baptized must in practice be pursued with still more urgency.
- 247. We agree with the response that we have to reflect in a more strictly theological way on the relationship between baptism, preaching and faith.

We agree in principle with the part of the response dealing with "the eucharist" and find there numerous suggestions taken from our vote on the first draft. We note in particular:

- 248. We stress the remarks in section 2 to the effect that the expression "holy supper" [in fact "Lord's supper"—translator's note] also more accurately represents the substance of the celebration described in Arnoldshain and Leuenberg than does the term "eucharist".
- 249. We suggest incorporating the specifically Reformation elements for understanding this sacrament by adding a commentary to BEM paras 1 or 2 so as to preserve the confessional balance of the document.

- 250. We accept section 4 and think that for a balanced statement in the commentary on para. 13 the Reformation formula that Christ's body and blood are given and received "in, with and under" [the signs of] bread and wine might be useful.
- 251. In accepting what is said in section 6 we would call to mind that in BEM the creative presence of the Spirit also takes in the creation, and this is something which in our church ought to be the object of more intensive theological reflection.

252. We agree with section 7 that the communion of the Lord's supper always has social implications; there is however still too little reflection on them in our theological tradition, as inter alia several misleading translations in the German text of BEM 20 (eucharist) show.
253. We agree particularly with the "conclusions" in section 10 and with point 2.2 of the "draft response".

We assent to the "ministry" part of the response and in particular note:

254. We stress as especially fundamental the sentence (para. 1): "The ministry entrusted with preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments rests on the divine commission but "is left to human responsibility as to its form".
255. We hold fast to the belief which is especially emphasized in our tradition, that responsibility for the unity of the faithful, preaching the apostles' message and ordering the church is assigned to the whole people of God. So for us the basic synodal principle of ecclesiastical government is not something we can give up. In the various duties for which they are authorized we see the difference between those who are ordained and those who are not.
256. In the threefold ministry as it has developed historically in several families of churches we see one, but not the only possible, shape of the ministry as a pointer to the multitude of services and charisms.
257. With section 8 we emphasize the importance of distinguishing between apostolic tradition and episcopal succession: further thought still needs to be given to the consequences for canon law.
258. The mutual recognition of their ministries must be the aim of all the churches' efforts.

*The Evangelical Church of the Church Province of Saxony*

The synod resolved:

259. The Evangelical Church of the Church Province of Saxony endorses the response of the member churches of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR to the World Council of Churches convergence document, "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry", in the version of 11

April  
1985.

260. The synod particularly reaffirms: In the general account of baptism, eucharist and ministry in the Lima text we recognize the apostolic faith of the one church of Christ grounded in the witness of holy scripture.

Accordingly we stress our willingness to recognize the baptism of those churches which like us recognize an expression of the apostolic faith in the convergence statement on baptism.

Accordingly we here reaffirm our desire to carry on discussions with other churches about mutual recognition of eucharistic celebration and the question of eucharistic hospitality.

We also stress, however, the point that discussion of the ministry cannot yet be considered closed, for it is a subject on which questions of such substance are still unresolved that convergence is not yet as evident as in the statements on baptism and the eucharist.

2. In our endorsement of the response is included the acknowledgment that a whole range of questions still needs further discussion and clarification.

261. The statements on the relationship between having a church connection and baptism (p. 12, para. 11.2) are symptoms of a problem and draw attention to a discussion that has only just begun within the Federation of Evangelical Churches and is still far from being a prescriptive clarification.

262. Theological discussions with those churches that are ready to proceed with us to two-way eucharistic hospitality we consider imperative (p. 29, para. 2.2).

As opposed to the short-term aim of attaining mutual eucharistic hospitality, the terms "intercommunion" and "joint celebration" indicate the long-term goal of ecumenical communion.

263. With regard to the problem of re-baptism (p. 28, ser. 2.1) our church has again had to learn from experience that the baptism of children in our church is not recognized by the Baptist community. On the other hand re-baptism has always been excluded by our Reformation churches. Discussion between the churches and communities will have to centre on the Lima document's challenge (BEM, Baptism 13) to respect the "sacramental integrity" of the gift and the "unrepeatability" of the reception of baptism.

264. The statement in the response that the ministries of all the churches "do not satisfactorily fulfill" their function since these churches are not in full eucharistic communion is so cautiously worded that its theological meaning is ultimately hard to make out. The 1983 draft statement (p. 23, para. 1.2) was clearer.

3. The synod of the Church Province of Saxony requests that its statement of 28 October 1984 be added as an appendix to the joint response of the member churches of the Federation.

Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR to the World Council of Churches convergence document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (A3715-2-967/850) and obtained an elucidation of it in its theological commission. It declares its agreement.

Regarding the section "The Convergence Statement on the Eucharist" in the text made available, we must again emphasize that ideas which suggest themselves from 1 Corinthians 11 for the practice of the Lord's supper and the interpretation of the events at the Lord's supper are becoming increasingly important for us (cf. Paper 33: 4.1-4.3 and Paper 59: 2.1; see also Appendix).

*The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg*

General Synod X, Session 8, 14 to 17 November 1985

Submission by the theological commission

The Synod took note of the response of the member churches of the



*Appendix to Paper no. 81*

1. From the synod's statement on the eucharist section of the Lima document (Session 4 of General Synod X, 13 November 1983; Paper 33).

*4. The section on eucharist and the biblical tradition*

As an Evangelical-Lutheran church we have to test the Lima document not only by our own beliefs but above all by the Bible. We are conscious that with regard to the Lord's supper in our church there are narrow ideas which have to be overcome by recourse to the Bible and also by dialogue with other churches. In recent years there has been movement in the practice of the Lord's supper in our church, and the question of the basis, content and shape of the Lord's supper has been increasingly made the subject of study. In this way we discover with excitement and joy the origins of the Lord's supper and answer the question posed in the preface of the Lima document. . . . The faith of the churches through the ages is easily discernible in the statements, but we know too little of the faith of the beginnings. We are convinced that we are closest to the origins of the Lord's supper in the tradition represented by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. This tradition is indeed cited in E para. 1 but is not adequately dealt with thereafter.

4.1 *"After supper"*: According to 1 Corinthians 11:25 Jesus "also took the cup, after supper", a reference to the close connection between the eucharist and a meal. In our church the Lord's supper is no longer celebrated exclusively at the altar and in the church but also at tables and in houses and elsewhere, where we drink and eat and chat and celebrate in close relationship with the Last Supper and with one another.

This close connection between the eucharist and actual meals which is discernible in the beginnings of our faith is not worked out in the Lima document.

4.2 *"The new covenant in my blood"*: According to 1 Corinthians 11:25 Jesus, when he had taken the cup, said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood". In E para. 2, 13 and 15 BEM's interest in "the body and blood of Christ" becomes clear. In the tradition passed on by Paul, however, it is not Christ's *blood* that takes first place but the *new covenant* in his blood. In Matthew/Mark on the other hand the equation is made of the contents of the cup (wine) and blood, and this is not in Paul. For him it is a question of an *event*, because "this cup" means the cup from which they are drinking, which is being passed round the table, which binds together those who drink from it in one covenant constituted by the death of Jesus (in his blood). This specifically Pauline feature must not be forgotten, because it points to the fact that in the original community there was already "scope for interpretation" which "to this day makes it possible to give people of different types a grasp of what the

Lord's supper means".<sup>1</sup> It follows that neither within one church nor among the churches can the goal be unity on one doctrine of the Lord's supper, but rather our purpose must be to accept one another with our different teachings about it.

4.3 *"It is not the Lord's supper that you eat"* (1 Cor. 11:20). In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul does not describe the eucharistic tradition for its own sake. By means of it he *criticizes* the Corinthian community's practice of the Lord's supper: "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat" (v. 20). The Lima text speaks too extravagantly of the eucharist. From Paul's standpoint, more soberness is necessary in view of its possibilities and effects and also its misuse.

We see Paul's criticism in close connection with the new understanding we have been given of the presence of Jesus Christ in the poor (cf. Matt. 25:40; Mark 9:36f). We cannot therefore link the occurrence of Christ's presence to the celebration of the eucharist in the way para. 13 does.

#### *Open questions for our practice of the Lord's supper*

... in our church. ... the following development has been very diversely evaluated: no longer the minister alone but all together or even only a single lay person pronounces the words of institution; lay people do the distribution; the ciborium and chalice are passed round from hand to hand; the minister receives both from the hand of a lay person. For some that which cannot be surrendered has thus been surrendered; for others in this way both the "solidarity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ" described in para. 21 and the "covenant" of 1 Corinthians 11, and communion as an action that "embraces all aspects of life" (para. 20), come alive.

2. From the synod's statement on "A Draft Response. . ." (Session 6 of General Synod X, 1-4 November 1984; Paper 59):

"2.1. In 4, 1-3 of its statement the synod referred to the views of communion set out and identifiable in 1 Corinthians 11. The synod is anxious that special attention must be paid to this text on the Lord's supper".

#### *The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Saxony*

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Saxony has commented as follows on the convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry:

1. The revised draft of a response by the Evangelical Churches in the GDR to the WCC Faith and Order Commission's convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry is in general approved as a joint response.

1 C. Hinz, "Zeichen der Zeit" 36/1982, p. 67.

2. The following observations are stressed:

- 265. We hold to infant baptism as the rule for the children of Christian parents. In view of the grace that is given to us in baptism we cannot recommend that Christian parents put off their children's baptism.
- 266. We hold to the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the Lord's supper. We hope that a greater measure of convergence is reached on this than the BEM text on the eucharist suggests in paras 13 and 15 and their commentaries.
- 267. We would point out that the ecclesiological premises — particularly on the BEM text on ministry — are still far from having been clarified. We hope that the ecumenical dialogue will make further progress on this basic question.

#### *The Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Thuringia*

Session 3 of Synod VII of the  
Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Thuringia,  
26 November-1 December 1985

The synod of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Thuringia endorses the response of the member churches of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic to the convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry in the latest revision (Secretariat of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic: document of 11 April 1985).

It asks the Conference of Evangelical Church Leaders in the German Democratic Republic to present this report to the World Council of Churches along with the following special emphases and comments as the report of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Thuringia.

In its resolution the synod of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Thuringia starts from the assumption that reception of the Lima document "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" will not be possible without a change in ecclesiological thinking. "It is not for us to judge others by our standards, but rather we have to measure ourselves and them against the apostolic witness to Christ, and only thus will we learn from Christ what is true for ourselves and others" (report of Bishop Leich to the synod on 21 March 1985). It is therefore important for our church that the members of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic should also speak with one voice in spite of differing opinions on individual questions.

In particular the synod further commends or registers misgivings on the following points, as the case may be:

#### *a) On baptism*

We endorse all that is said about baptism as the bond of unity and about responsible baptismal practice. In this context our church feels compelled to further consideration of the practice of confirmation and the connection between baptism and church affiliation.

The question of "renunciation of evil" as part of the order of baptism has also been raised in our church. It should, however, be reintroduced into church practice if clear and comprehensible formulae can be found and guidance can be given on how this renunciation of evil is realistically to be effected (B para. 9). For this renunciation makes it clear that baptism involves a change of allegiance.

*b) On the eucharist*

Expressly welcome are the moves to celebrate and receive the Lord's supper more frequently. The concern for inserting the words of distribution as an addendum to the list of elements in the eucharistic liturgy has our support. We would stress our comment that the significance of the Lord's supper as a meal of forgiveness is not satisfactorily expounded in the convergence statement.

*c) On the ministry*

In view of the great importance which the ordained ministry has for ecumenical interchurch discussions, we feel it is a shortcoming that no elaborated doctrine of the church is to be found in the convergence statements.

We emphasize the need for mutual recognition of ministries. Further reflections on the development and possible sub-divisions of the ministry turn upon it. Contrary to the statement made in the response (Ministry 10, 1), in our church the laying on of hands is obligatory in ordination.

For future editions of the convergence statements our church asks for a careful checking of the various translations. It should be pointed out at least in a footnote that e.g. whereas in the original French text on baptism the phrase "adult baptism" is as a rule used, this is then misleadingly translated in both the German and the English texts as "believers' baptism".

The convergence statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry will now have to pass the test in the congregations. It seems to us important that a thorough ecclesiastical process of reception is now beginning. In it the churches and congregations must lay hold on what they identify as tasks in these convergence statements.

## REFORMED CHURCH IN HUNGARY

### General remarks

The synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary welcomes the Lima document, the result of work done for almost half a century by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. We are of the opinion that the Lima document (in the following abbreviated to LD) is the first in church history trying to bring the views of churches with different traditions concerning baptism, eucharist and ministry to a common denominator. We are convinced that the LD is the best considered and elaborated paper in the whole history of the ecumenical movement in the service of the unity of the church as to these three often discussed questions of decisive importance. Its great theological variety as well as its profound biblical analyses make it one of the best documents on unity.

The LD is unquestionably an irenic paper endeavouring, without giving up the basic elements of identity, to take into consideration and to respect the characteristics of the various traditions.

One of the most positive features of the document is the realization that the questions of faith and unity in the church are connected with the unity and divisions respectively in the world as well as with the global problems to be solved and the ills to be healed.

We approve of the decision adopted by the Central Committee according to which a difference should be made between the responses of the churches to the paper and its reception. In this sense, our church regards the LD as a paper of convergence and not yet of consensus.

### Baptism

The community of our church has received with pleasure and approval the theses of the LD on baptism and recognizes in them the manifestation of

>2,000,000 members, 4 church districts, 1,133 congregations, 4 bishops, 1,255 ministers.

their own faith. We deem them useful for the self-examination of our church and for the deepening of the congregations' consciousness in faith with regard to baptism. In churches practising infant baptism we attribute special importance to the responsibility of the Christian family and congregation for the education of the baptized child in faith. Our church agrees with the unique and unrepeatable character of baptism. It would be a significant step forward on the way to unity if the separate churches accepted the validity of one another's baptism.

In our opinion, the chapter of the LD on baptism is already ripe for a consensus. The dialogues going on between different churches justify our hope that the churches will arrive at an ecumenical agreement with regard to baptism.

### **Eucharist**

As to the origin of the eucharist, we agree with the multilateral and substantial approach of the LD. The responses of the congregations bear an unequivocal testimony to the evangelical realization that the centre of worship is the living word, Jesus Christ. It is He that the audible and visible word, the preaching and the sacraments — thus the eucharist too — bear witness to. The liturgical reform of the Reformed Church in Hungary contains the whole richness of the eucharistic elements enumerated in the LD.

We attribute great importance to the emphasis laid by the LD on the social-ethical consequences of the eucharist and are pleased to declare that this has traditionally been practised at the administration of the Lord's supper in our church. We approve of the presence of children at the eucharistic worship, but we do not wish to administer the Lord's supper to children before their confirmation.

Out of its own tradition and its present theological insight, the Reformed Church in Hungary recommends the following thoughts to Faith and Order as well as to the whole community of the oikoumene for further consideration. We consider the Calvinistic emphasis of the *unio mystica cum Christo* at the Lord's supper important. In the sense of this teaching the believing congregation partakes of the fruits of Christ's redemptive death and resurrection, i.e. of the fellowship with his person, in such a way that, in consequence of the eucharist, they are also sacrificed through their participation in the ministry of Jesus Christ. This means that they give their life for mankind in love and in a ministry performed to the glory of God. We consider it important to remark that, in the sense of the above, our church regards the Lord's supper as the sacrament of service. In our opinion, both the ecumenical unity and the eucharistic community of the oikoumene can best be approached from this angle.

We are convinced that, in the eucharist, the reception of the gift of Christ's sacrifice and, in response to it, the thanks-offering of the congreg-

ation, the church, are inseparable realities which, however, must be distinguished from one another.

The LD should more clearly express the fact that Christ's sacrifice always precedes our thanks-offering.

### **Ministry**

Our church highly appreciates that this part of the LD is based on the biblical principle of the universal priesthood.

Another positive feature of the document is that several references are made in it to the historic and cultural preconditions of the development of the various forms of ministry, alleviating thereby the differences which, in the course of history, often caused conflicts between the churches.

We are convinced that the depository of the apostolic tradition is the congregation where the word of God is preached purely, i.e. without any falsification, where the sacraments are properly administered, where *koinonia* and *diakonia* are practised. Our church has always laid, and still lays, great emphasis on the necessity that ministers should really be called by Christ and properly trained and ordained for their ministry by the church.

We feel a deficiency of the LD in the part on ministry inasmuch as the episcopal, presbyterial and diaconal characters of ministry are only mentioned in their hierarchical order, and the Calvinistic order of the church realized in most of the evangelical churches is wholly neglected. An amendment of the LD should clearly express the equality of rights of the ministries of pastors, presbyters, teachers and deacons in a synodal-presbyterian order.

The mutual recognition proposed by the LD is worthy of note. Its acceptance would be a great step forward on the way towards unity.

### **Closing words**

The community of the Reformed Church in Hungary is generally in agreement with most of the statements of the LD. But in order that we can — together with the community of the churches of the Reformation and in good conscience — sanction the whole of the document, the committee charged with the improvement of the LD should take further steps forward in some questions basically important for us. We can in no way dispense with the clear expression of the fact that the living word of God, *viva vox Dei*, made flesh in Jesus Christ, written down in the scriptures and explained by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26), is above all church traditions and is their criterion at all times. We attach great importance to the assertion of the biblical teaching that the church was called to existence by the word of God, therefore the church can only be a blessed instrument of God as a *creatura verbi*.

We do not think it probable that the "visible unity of the church", in the sense of an organized unity, can be accomplished through a consensus

proposed by the LD. We do hope, however, that the profound study of the document will help the member churches grow stronger in their faith, better understand and respect one another's tenets, and be ready to arrive at a greater degree of common faith, joint witness and concerted action.

## EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE CONGO

### **Baptism**

The Evangelical Church of the Congo stresses that baptism with water should only be practised by an ordained or consecrated minister in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). We opt for baptism by immersion (Matt. 3:13-16) but may exceptionally practise baptism by aspersion in the case of the sick, the infirm, the aged whose capacity for movement is limited, and Christians living in regions where water-courses are very far away or practically non-existent. We shall have to build baptisteries gradually in or beside every church, so that baptism by immersion may be practised in all our parishes. We ask the other churches of Jesus Christ to make every effort to practise baptism by immersion only.

What attitude should one adopt towards the baptism of children and baptism with water and with the Holy Spirit?

#### *a) Baptism of children*

Those ecclesiastical authorities who practise infant baptism do so on the basis of a few texts in the New Testament, texts which are frequently misinterpreted. In 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul writes: "For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband (*adelphos*, brother, i.e. the Christian to whom she is married). Otherwise your children (*ta tekna*) would be unclean, but as it is they are holy

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*(hagia).*"

This text should persuade the servants of Jesus Christ to avoid infant baptism because these children (*tekna*), being holy (*hagia*), have no need of conversion, repentance and renunciation of sin to be finally purified and sanctified through baptism.

In Acts 16:15, Luke informs us that Lydia was baptized together with her household (*oikos*). According to Acts 16:33, a gaoler was baptized with all

> 110,460 members, 103 parishes, 93 pastors, 254 evangelists, 2,468 deacons, 3,548 deaconesses, 47 missionaries.

his dependents (*hoi autou pantes*). The "dependents" of the gaoler and the "household" of Lydia recall the "household" (*oikos*) of Cornelius mentioned in Acts 10:2. The term "household" means here not just the immediate family, but also servants and subordinates. In those days, when the master decided to be converted and to receive baptism, his whole household was customarily converted and baptized along with him (see 1 Cor. 1:16, Acts 16:15). Certainly there were "households" baptized like their masters, but no text of the New Testament specifies that the children of these households (being holy or "saints", and as yet knowing nothing of sanctification by conversion and baptism) were also baptized. The complete absence of precision on this point should be an added inducement to ecclesiastical authorities to avoid the baptism of children.

The Evangelical Church of the Congo maintains therefore that there is no foundation for infant baptism in the teachings of Jesus Christ. We note that our Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry met many children. He did not find in them any impurity that compelled him to have them baptized. On the contrary, he found little children (*paidia*) to be pure, since he declared that the kingdom of God is for such as are like them (Luke 18:16, Matt. 18:3, 19:14). Instead of having them baptized, Jesus contented himself with laying his hands on them (Matt. 19:13) and blessing them (Mark 10:16).

It is proper to baptize children once they have reached the age of reason (only from 12 years old onwards), and of course adults. The Evangelical Church of the Congo abstains from baptizing little children, but is careful not to condemn other churches which practise infant baptism in conformity with New Testament teaching, as distinct from traditions with no basis in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### *b) Baptism with water and with the Holy Spirit*

There is only one baptism (Eph. 4:5), but this unique baptism is simultaneously a baptism with water and with the Spirit. The consecrated or ordained minister baptizes with water, and Jesus Christ himself baptizes with the Holy Spirit. We insist on the fact that Jesus Christ alone has the right and the power to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11-12; John 1:33). No human being has this right, this power. Any who claim to baptize their neighbour with the Holy Spirit are going out of their way to usurp the power exclusively reserved to Jesus Christ. They are foundering on the rock of heresy. In principle Jesus baptized with the Holy Spirit after the baptism with water (Matt. 3:11; John 1:33). But Luke tells us that when the Lord so wishes, he can baptize non-Christians (Acts 10:44-46). The same sacred author shows clearly that those who receive baptism with the Spirit should also receive baptism with water (Acts 10:47-48). This convinces us that baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Spirit are inseparable. According to the New Testament, it is inadmissible to keep the one and abolish the other.

#### *c) The recognition of baptism*

Every baptism practised by a consecrated or ordained minister in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19) or in the Lord's name alone (Acts 10:48), in any Christian church, is valid. The Evangelical Church of the Congo recognizes such baptisms, but refuses to recognize the so-called "baptism with the Holy Spirit" practised by certain believers. The Evangelical Church of the Congo firmly believes that Jesus Christ alone baptizes with the Holy Spirit. It refuses to rebaptize any Christian who has been baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (or in the name of Jesus alone) by an ordained or consecrated minister, unless the person concerned insistently requests it. We earnestly recommend all churches to give up baptizing small children (under 10); blessing them, as practised by Jesus (Matt. 19:13, Mark 10:16), is sufficient. But before and after this benediction the child should receive continuous Christian instruction. Confirmation is totally non-existent in the New Testament. The Evangelical Church of the Congo finds it pointless.

#### **Eucharist**

The Evangelical Church of the Congo, in conformity with the commandment of the Lord Jesus, celebrates the eucharist with both elements, bread and sweet wine. We find it difficult to recognize the eucharist celebrated with only one of these elements, for thus to celebrate it is to obey the Lord's command only in part, or in other words, to distort the injunction of the sole Saviour and Supreme Head of the church.

The Evangelical Church of the Congo cannot therefore partake of such a Lord's supper. On the other hand, we are happy to recognize the eucharist celebrated with two elements (Matt. 26:26-27). Every baptized person (youngsters and adults, unmarried or monogamous) living a life of faith in the Lord is entitled to participate in the Lord's supper. The eucharist meal is not intended for Christians who take pleasure in sin; only the truly faithful will eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

#### **Ministry**

268. The Evangelical Church of the Congo recognizes with BEM that the apostolic church of the first century had a variety of ministries: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons. We equally recognize with BEM that from the second and third centuries onwards an evolution took place which resulted in the threefold ministry (bishop, presbyter, i.e. priest and deacon), and in the formulation of the doctrine of apostolic succession.

269. With regard to the apostolic succession, the Evangelical Church of the

Congo sees as the essential points:

a) the faithfulness of the church to the apostolic teaching recorded in the New Testament;

168 *Churches respond to BEM*

b) the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit who guarantees the continuity of the apostolic teaching through all the forms of ministry adopted in the course of history from the second to the twentieth century.

270. Since in the first century the variety of ministries did not call into question the unity of the church, the different forms of the ministry should not be allowed to become a source of division among the churches of the present day.

271. The Evangelical Church of the Congo agrees, however, that God is calling all his churches to harmonize their viewpoints regarding the form and content appropriate to those ministries, which they could unhesitatingly adopt, provided that the episcopal churches should not automatically be considered as the norm to follow on this subject.

272. Convinced that the matter essentially boils down to faithfulness to the only-begotten Son of God who is the same

yesterday, today and forever, the Evangelical Church of the Congo is prepared to recognize the ministry of all the churches faithful to Jesus Christ, confessed and obeyed as God, Saviour and Lord of the world.

**Conclusion**

The BEM document marks an important stage in church reconciliation, dialogue and collaboration. The Evangelical Church of the Congo hopes that a new edition will appear which will take account of the observations made by the different churches.

In such matters as baptism, eucharist and ministry, the Evangelical Church of the Congo bears in mind the historical and cultural context of each present-day problem, while remaining strictly faithful to Jesus Christ as portrayed in the New Testament.



# MORAVIAN CHURCH IN JAMAICA

Jamaica shares the stated aim of the Faith and Order Commission, that is, to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe. We recognize the patience of those involved in the study of these articles of faith which span over fifty years from Lausanne in 1927 to Lima in 1982. We are also appreciative of the objectivity and openness displayed in soliciting responses from participating denominations. May we find and accept consensus on the final publication.

## Response to baptism

We found the theology and content of the article agreeable to our historical interpretation and practice of the sacrament. However, we would make these observations:

273. It is our view that Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, his life, death and resurrection. This moment gives highest significance and meaning to the sacrament for the church. We accept baptism as a gift of God administered in the name of Father, Son and

Holy Spirit, but would further share the view that "gift" is the grace of baptism or the invisible act of cleansing of the sinful Adamic nature by the activity of the Holy Spirit.

274. The ethical implication of being pardoned, cleansed and justified are acceptable, but the recipients must appropriate these and enter into their fullness over time.

Hence, we share the view for an uncompromising need for constant nurture and maturity, be it infant or adult.

275. Paragraph II needs further clarification—it is stated, "while the possibility that infant baptism was also practised in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly

> 25,000 members,  
52 congregations,  
17 pastors.

attested pattern in the New Testament documents". Granted. And even though the commentary provided further explanation a shadow is cast over the practice of infant baptism and maybe here is where part of our problem lies. We must not appear to compromise truth — so there is need for more explicit clarification of the authenticity of the practice of infant baptism in the final documents. This may be substantiated biblically as well as our view of the infant in relation to the kingdom of God, the effects of the corporate faith of the believing community and the influence culture had on the practice of the sacrament. But there is need to remove the shadow.

### **Eucharist**

A. To say that the sharing of meals during the earthly ministry of our Lord was a sign of the immanence of the kingdom, seems an over-statement. Jesus did not make himself known exclusively after the resurrection in the breaking of bread, but also on the day of his resurrection and as He journeyed with fellow travellers on the way to Emmaus. The manner of his appearance was never stereotyped or predictable. Therefore the church does not regard the eucharist as continuing these meals as kingdom signs. The eucharist is a proclamation that the kingdom has come and will come.

It is the reassurance of salvation rather than the granting of salvation that comes from eating and drinking the elements symbolizing Christ's body and blood.

### *B. The eucharist as anamnesis or memorial*

We accept that the atonement for sin on the cross is unrepeatable. And further state that the eucharist was to be in *remembrance* memorial and not re-enactment nor transubstantiation as advocated by sections of the church. If the miracle of transubstantiation operates, then the bread and wine now changed into actual flesh and blood of Jesus could no longer be said to be "memorial" as He is literally present and materially so in bread and wine.

### *C. The eucharist as invocation of the Spirit*

We view the eucharist not so much as invocation for the presence of the Holy Spirit but as affirmation and recognition of that presence. Faith posits the presence but does not link that presence with the symbols of bread and wine. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes the eucharist real but that presence does not depend on the faith of participants. Faith is necessary for perceiving the presence not creating the presence.

### *D. Eucharist as communion of the faithful*

The eucharist judges society with its divisions — political, social, racial and the injustices in human relationships. But it is more so a judgment upon the church, when there is confessional opposition within the body of Christ. There are sections of the church that will not admit others to the eucharist,

and even within communions of the same persuasion eucharistic freedom does not obtain due to social and racial barriers.

### *E. Celebration of the eucharist*

It is Christ who indeed is the celebrant at the eucharist; the presiding minister is his ambassador representative. As such it must be made clear (a) that the eucharist is Christ's gift to the church; it is not the right of a few but the privilege of all the faithful; (b) that the invitation to practise is from Christ to all believers.

### **Ministry**

A careful reading of the document on ministry including the main propositions as well as the commentaries gives a satisfactory and positive impression and leads to the conclusion that comprehensive and painstaking study was made of the subject. The compilers were sensitive to the contents of the biblical records, the differing interpretations of such records and also the practice in the various church traditions. There is nothing offensive or unacceptable to our Moravian interpretation or traditional concept and practice of Christian ministry.

Notwithstanding the above, there are two points which in our opinion need further study and clarification. These are found in §§17 and 18 and deal with:

276.the ordained ministry and priesthood; and

277.the ministry of men and women in the church.

### *a) Ordained ministry and priesthood*

Christianity or the New Testament church had its roots in Judaism of the Old Testament and it is difficult to separate the one from the other. In the Old Testament the priesthood was a vital part of its ministry and the New Testament refers to Christ as the Great High Priest. If the ordained ministry is representative of Christ in its foundational nature and of the redeemed community in its mission, witness and service, then the ordained ministry must represent Christ and the community in their fullest role and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not deprive the ordained ministry of its priestly function. In actual fact, and pressed to its logical conclusion, it should enhance it. The ordained minister is *prophet* in preaching, pastor in shepherding, and priest in the administration of the sacraments and in intercession. The Protestant clergy therefore need to recapture the vision and practice of their priestly role and so represent and fulfill the ministry of Christ in its totality.

### *b) The ordination of women*

If the ordained ministry is representative of Christ how can the church, being true to its Christological beliefs, support and accept the ordination of

women? Is this not a contradiction of the church's Christology? Or is it not? Is there a distinction between functional and biological representation? These questions need to be faced and answered satisfactorily. Otherwise the ordination of women will continue to be a problem and may well retard the process of church unity instead of promoting it. In our Christological formulations vis-a-vis the ordained ministry it needs to be clearly emphasized that the ministry as a representation of Christ is functional and not biological; and even this distinction may not ultimately remove the traditional barriers to the ordination of women.

### Summary

#### 1. *What consequences do these have for the church?*

278. Greater and fuller appreciation of each other's practice.

279. There is a more direct focus on the essentials of baptism, eucharist and ministry rather than on form and method.

#### 2. *What guidance do they afford?*

280. Sound information for study and review of our customary beliefs. And a reinforcement of certain traditional and historical positions, example, no to re-baptism and offers liberality in choice of method to converts from other religions.

281. It affords a more serious selection of candidates for baptism to avoid abuses.

282. Apart from the two qualifications outlined the Lima document on ministry is an excellent production and goes a long way in bridging the gap existing between the various church traditions.

#### 3. *Suggestions*

283. Make a clearer statement on the authenticity of infant baptism.

284. That baptized children be not automatically admitted to the Lord's supper until there is clear personal profession of faith since there is clear possibility that the training and nurturing may not be carried out sufficiently and satisfactorily. Otherwise our liberality in this direction could result in worst abuses.

## CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THAILAND

The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT) called a meeting to consider the BEM document on 10 January 1987, at the headquarters of the CCT in Bangkok. The meeting was arranged as a major conference almost like the general council of the CCT, but we also included all major denominations which exist in Thailand. They are the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand and the Seventh Day Adventists.

Attending the conference were the officers of the CCT: the moderator, the vice moderator, the general secretary and the treasurer; the moderators of the 15 districts of CCT, some pastors of the CCT, the representatives of the two theological seminaries of the CCT, representatives of the committee on theological education of the CCT, representatives of the evangelism department of the CCT, representatives of the women's department of the CCT, and some lay leaders who were interested in the subject. The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand sent their official representatives. The Ecumenical Relationship Department of the Roman Catholic Church in Thailand sent some comments. Also present were a representative of the RCC Theological College and some Jesuit and the CCT theologians.

The BEM text was translated into Thai by a member of the Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC. There were 1,000 copies which were distributed to all major denominations and to all church leaders to read for a year before the meeting was convened. The meeting was arranged as a panel discussion. The topic of "baptism" was led by the dean of McGilvary Theological Faculty, "eucharist" was led by the principal of the Bangkok Institute of Theology and "ministry" was led by the general secretary of the CCT.

The introduction was given by a member of the Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC by aiming to encourage everybody to look to the original meaning of baptism, eucharist and ministry as expressed in the BEM text which is rooted in Christ and handed down by the apostles to us today. From this starting point we all can find where we ourselves stand and in

• 35,100 members, 15 districts, 237 congregations, 76 ministers.

what ways we differ. Our goal is to find a way in spite of our differences to be one in Christ, in order to fulfill his will and to bear witness to Christ our Lord in the world by loving one another.

After the three leaders presented the BEM the meeting continued with discussion. The summary from the discussion can be made as follows:

The CCT is a united church of Presbyterian, American Baptist and the Disciples of Christ. The CCT accepts the BEM text as expressing the faith of the church through the ages. We accept other churches' baptism, eucharist and ministry. However, the American Baptist Church still retains the rule that anyone who has been baptized outside the Baptist church and transfers his or her membership into their church will be accepted as a member of the Baptist church, but he cannot be ordained as a deacon. About the BEM text, we feel that the part related to ordained women in the ministry is too brief and touches only the surface. Although the CCT has no problem concerning ordained women ministers, we are concerned for the women ministers in other denominations and in other parts of the world.

The text of BEM is appreciated and also well accepted as expressing the faith of the church through ages by the individuals of the Roman Catholic Church who were in this meeting and by those who sent in their written comments. But they, in fact, accepted only the baptism of other churches. The eucharist and the ministry, including the ordination of women, still remain a problem.

The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand (EFT) consists of a variety of big and small churches. Some consist of only one congregation. Some call themselves the Evangelical Churches, some are the Pentecostal churches. There are together a hundred different groups. Not all of the groups could send their representatives and so only two official representatives of the EFT were present and they could not speak for all. They could not accept the BEM text on behalf of all their constituent groups. Some members still have difficulty in accepting the baptism of others which is different from immersion in water. Therefore they still re-baptize their new members regardless of whether they have been baptized already or not.

It has been generally expressed by lay people that the text of BEM is too theological for the ordinary people to understand and sounds unlike Protestantism but rather like the language used in the early centuries of the church.

This meeting resulted in some encouraging news. First, there were some voices raised in this meeting for the continuation of ecumenical study and discussion, preferably in small groups. Second, right after this conference one of the leading churches of CCT in Bangkok started a serious study of the BEM. Third, the BEM meeting resulted in arousing enthusiasm to know more about baptism, eucharist, and ministry, and several groups in many churches are beginning to study about baptism, eucharist and ministry by using the BEM text.

## EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RIVER PLATE (ARGENTINA)

### Baptism

On the section on baptism the commission has reached the following conclusions:

285. In comparing our confessions of faith, the rules of church government, the norms of church life and the position of the Leuenberg Agreement on baptism with what is set out in the Lima text, we find that it takes our church's understanding of baptism into account.
286. We note that the text takes up a broad position in the doctrinal articles on baptism and in their practical and liturgical application. We thus recommend that it be studied for the enrichment of our own church life, without thereby implying that we are abandoning our present understanding.
287. We note that the text shows profound respect for churches with different practices and doctrinal positions from our own. We welcome this generous spirit in that it makes possible fellowship between churches, which our church also desires.
288. We share the expressions of understanding by churches of similar confession to our own in face of other practices and doctrinal positions, since it is in accord with the respect and spirit of fellowship in which we wish to work together in the cause of ecumenism.
289. We consider that the question of infant baptism deserves

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particular  
attention. On the basis of its understanding of baptism, the text  
calls in  
question the meaning of confirmation as practised by our church, in  
that it  
casts doubt on the practice of excluding from holy communion  
those  
children who have not been confirmed (§14, commentary; Eucharist,  
§19,

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, the text is challenging us to a deeper under  
standing and to consideration of possible changes in our practice. In  
our  
tradition, baptism has always been understood as a gift from God, for  
which  
reason it could not be denied to infants. In baptism, God accepts  
infants as

- 60,000 members, 32 congregations, 37 pastors, 12 ministers.

his children, giving them his Spirit. It is necessary to examine whether this connection has been unequivocally maintained throughout the text.

For example: in § 1, no mention is made of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, whereas mention is made of incorporation into Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. In §4, it could be deduced from the first sentence that children are excluded from baptism. In §5, the relation between the bestowal of the Holy Spirit and baptism would not seem to be described as a fixed inseparable unity.

### **Holy communion**

On the section on the eucharist the commission has reached the following conclusions:

290. We express our satisfaction at the enrichment brought to our church by the consideration of all the aspects dealt with in this section, particularly its broad biblical foundation. In this regard, §§22 and following, which speak of holy communion as an invitation to the kingdom, are deserving of special mention. So is the rediscovery of the *epiklesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the celebration, which removes the possibility of its being interpreted as a magical rite (§14, commentary). Also worthy of mention is the emphasis on the Trinitarian aspect of holy communion, which makes it possible also to bring the whole creation into the sacrifice of praise (§§4 and 14).
291. On the other hand, we must state that study of this section has proved difficult for us since it includes a large number of understandings of the eucharist from so many other church traditions from around the world. This diversity, while certainly enriching our understanding of holy communion, also dilutes its essential meaning.
292. As to the actual manner of celebrating holy communion in the congregations of our church, we urge them to take the recommendation in §28 into account, and thus also the outline of an order of service in §27.
293. It also seems to us necessary to stress that we miss a deeper consideration of the meaning of holy communion as forgiveness of sin.

Forgive

ness of sin is mentioned twice (§§9 and 21).

The outline of an order for holy communion (§27) includes an act of repentance and a declaration of pardon, but it omits the *Agnus Dei*, Christ, Lamb of God, and the words of administration to the individual, "the body/blood of Christ given for you for the forgiveness of your sins". In the general tradition of the Reformation particular emphasis is placed on the declaration to the individual of the forgiveness of his/her sins. It seems to us that an additional article should be included specifically taking the importance of this aspect into account.

5. The celebration of holy communion is without doubt a central act in the church's worship. It seems that Christians in the ancient world always included the celebration of holy communion in their acts of worship. But to

describe the eucharist as *the* central act of the church's worship means detracting from the proclamation of the word of God in other, non-sacramental, ways.

294. This section uses the term "sacrifice" (§4, cf. Ministry, §17), and defines it as a "sacrifice of praise". We welcome the way in which the text here takes up the language of our tradition (Luther), which regards hymns and prayers as the sacrifice of the faithful (Rom. 12:1-2).

295. We believe that we can reply affirmatively to the question formulated in this section, in the commentary on §13, whether there can be co-existence or not between the two positions concerning the real presence, the one stressing the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic elements of bread and wine, and the other stressing the real presence of Christ in the whole act of communion.

296. We consider that the stress placed by some churches on the continuing presence of Christ in the consecrated elements (§32) should not oblige other churches to adopt practices hitherto unknown or rejected. It is to be understood in any case that the elements remaining should be disposed of reverently.

### **Ministry**

On the section on ministry the commission has reached the following conclusions:

297. We are in agreement with the starting point of this section, which locates ministry in the calling of the whole people of God, giving the appropriate biblical basis. We agree that ministry can be exercised in various forms according to the historical context, including the pattern of the threefold ordained ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons. We do not doubt that this pattern of the threefold ministry can serve as an expression of the unity we seek or as a means to attain it. But it needs

to be stressed that according to §19 in this section it is no more than one possible pattern. We believe in general that in the quest for unity issues concerning the ministry should always be subordinate to the actual life of communities in their commitment to the gospel. We thus cannot agree with the position taken up in this section which ends up by further discussion only of the possibilities of the threefold ministry.

298. We consider the statements on the succession of bishops problematical. We agree that apostolic succession is to be seen in the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments (§34). We consider it necessary to state also that the continuity of the apostolic tradition is to be found in the New Testament and, in the light of this, continuity in the regular transmission of the ordained ministry as the guardian of apostolic tradition ceases to be a *sine qua non*.

299. We consider it necessary that further study should be devoted to the possible priestly nature of the ordained ministry according to the New

Testament (§17), and also to the meaning of the term "priestly", which is used at various points in this section.

300. As regards the statement in §18 of this section on the need to discover which ministries can be exercised by men and which can be exercised by women, we are inclined to think that in every case the church should discover when a ministry can be exercised by one or the other. With regard to the sex of ministers, it also remains an open question in §50 of this section whether sex can also become an impediment to the exercise of ministry.

301. We have doubts concerning the meaning of the sentence, "This ordination, however, can have different intentions according to the specific tasks of bishops, presbyters and deacons. . ." (§39), because it seems to presuppose different ordinations. In our understanding there is only one ordination since there is only one ministry to which ordination takes place. This ministry can include various aspects and functions which thus necessitate different acts of induction to particular responsibilities.

302. In regard to §§9 and 10 in this section, we believe that a more balanced basis for the ordained ministry and its apostolicity is required, taking into account all New Testament streams of thought, including the Pauline.

303. In regard to the sentence in §12 of this section, "Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity", we propose that it should be amended to read, "In their function as messengers of the gospel, their presence reminds. . ."

304. In regard to the sentence in §13 of this section, "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the word of God. . .", we propose that it should be amended to read, "The chief, but not exclusive,

responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble. . ."

305. In §53 of this section, which sets out the steps required of the churches with a view to unity and growing together, we note that the step required of the tradition of our church implies the acceptance of changes in the way the ministry is exercised. By contrast, the same is not required of churches preserving episcopal succession, who are merely asked to accord limited recognition to the ministries of other churches.

In the light of this observation we request that further consideration be given throughout the section on ministry to the ordering of ministers in the churches of the Reformation.



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and

## MELANESIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

! The Melanesian Council of Churches, at its Annual General Meeting in Popondetta, 12-16 February 1984, formed a Committee on Theology and Melanesian Life with the express purpose of helping the churches respond to BEM. The Eastern Highlands Churches' Council formed a discussion group which met several times. Though not all the churches listed below attended all meetings, most were represented at all of them: the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, the Catholic Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, the United Church of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, the Christian Life Centre, the Salvation Army, the Goroka Baptist Church, the Church of Christ.

### Introduction

306. The member churches of the Melanesian Council of Churches are grateful to the World Council of Churches for presenting the document on "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" (BEM) to them for study and response. They acknowledge that this document is the result of over fifty years of effort by the Commission on Faith and Order. This Commission now includes theologians from virtually every Christian tradition, including the Roman Catholic Church and many representatives of third-world churches. Our churches in Melanesia feel that they can be part of the movement towards greater unity among Christians by responding to BEM. They recognize that the BEM document does not yet represent full agreement ("consensus") among the churches, but it is the closest they have ever come to an expression of their common faith ("convergence").
307. This response to BEM was prepared almost entirely by a discussion group of the Eastern Highlands Churches' Council meeting at the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Papua New Guinea. It was possibly the most representative group of its kind ever to be convened in Melanesia. This statement was drafted for submission to the Melanesian Council of Churches as the basis of its official response to the Commission on Faith

Order, while leaving each member church free to make its own individual response.

308. As Christians in Melanesia, we confess that we still have much to learn about what our brothers and sisters in other denominations believe and how they practise their faith. Nevertheless, we are also aware that BEM calls us to go beyond simply comparing our beliefs and practices with those of others. It calls each church to "recognize in this text the faith of the Church through the ages" (p. x). Though there have been dialogues between individual churches here in the past ("bilateral", such as Anglican-Roman Catholic and United-Evangelical Lutheran), we are now asked to take the further step of responding to BEM together ("multilateral"), reflecting as we do so on the consequences of BEM for further dialogue and the guidance it can give us in our Melanesian context.

309. We must also confess that many of the theological problems addressed in BEM seem foreign to us, since they arise out of the history of Christianity in Europe and thus do not appear relevant to our Melanesian concerns. However, we realize that missionaries, in bringing us the Christian faith, also brought divisions which separate Christians throughout the world. In doing our part to help heal these divisions, we hope to grow in communion with our partner churches overseas and with Christians in other developing countries whose problems are similar to ours.

310. Here are some of the particular concerns we have in mind when we study BEM:

- the struggle to express our faith in Melanesian ways, finding the right relationship between the teachings of our churches and the customs and traditions of our people;
- our need for a firm Christian basis on which to work together in solving the problems of development faced by newly-independent nations;
- the tensions caused by the inability of some churches and missions to recognize the faith and baptism of others.

We now present our response to BEM in the prayerful hope that it will make a small contribution towards the eventual reception of a common expression of the apostolic faith by all churches.

### **Baptism**

311. Melanesians deeply appreciate the significance of initiation. There is no such thing as self-initiation; rather, elders or those with authority to act on behalf of the community perform the rites which often symbolize death and rebirth, from which children emerge as adults and full members of the community.

312. In Melanesia, the community always includes the recent dead, the spirits and the ancestors. People regard it as necessary for the wellbeing of the community to communicate with the spirits of the dead and of nature.

Though this wider concept of community corresponds to certain Christian traditions, e.g. prayer for the dead, veneration of the saints, petitions for good health, fruitful harvests and safety on journeys, we do not find the notion of incorporation into this wider community explicitly mentioned in the section on baptism. Nevertheless, we rejoice to see baptism described as incorporation into the body of Christ (§§1, 6) and initiation into the community of faith (§12).

313. Some of our churches, especially those from Baptist and Pentecostal traditions, are unable to admit that infant baptism is scriptural (cf. §11). They insist that the rebirth and renewal that are an essential part of baptism (cf. §2) demand a true repentance such as can only be experienced by adults. Lutherans, on the other hand, regard this as setting conditions for God's grace and making faith into a human work. The document characterizes baptism as being related to "life-long growth into Christ" (§9) and "a response of faith made within the believing community" (§12). It affirms that "the Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism" (§5). This helps us to see how those Christian communities which pledge to nurture the faith of the baptized make the Christian initiation of the very young more acceptable while at the same time taking on a grave responsibility. Indiscriminate baptism of infants (cf. §[21] [b]) and a too easy reliance on godparents can weaken this responsibility. For Catholics and Anglicans, the renewal of baptismal vows at Easter (cf. §[14] [c]) and, for Lutherans, the importance given to confirmation (§14) serve to emphasize this responsibility.

314. We find that most of our churches do indeed have "equivalent alternatives" (§[12]) to both infant and believers' baptism in their processes of Christian initiation regarded as a whole. Where Pentecostals or Baptists would baptize a repentant adult, Catholics would offer the

sacrament of penance; both are intended as the seal of repentance. Whereas the older traditions do not hesitate to baptize infants, others dedicate them to God in the presence of the community. In many churches, confirmation emphasizes the continual working of the Holy Spirit, given in baptism.

10. The statement that "Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the 'Old Adam' is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken" (§3) is a clear affirmation that baptism is the firm foundation of our unity in Christ. It is "a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship" (§6). Though "re-baptism" is frequently practised in Melanesia, we are striving to clear away the misunderstandings on which it is based (§13). There is perhaps no greater hindrance, in our context, to the realization of our unity in Christ. Our disagreements about baptism cause us to neglect our "common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the Gospel of Christ" (§10), for we see the proclamation of the word as an integral part of baptism itself.

### Eucharist

11. Whereas the term "eucharist" is current in the Catholic and Anglican churches, Lutherans speak about the "Lord's supper" while the United Church prefers "holy communion". But there is general agreement among us that this celebration is indeed "the central act of the Church's worship"

(§1)■

315. There are Melanesian equivalents for the idea of "sacrifice", e.g. in the *dema* myth where a life is taken in order that new life may continue to appear. However, the idea of a unique sacrifice which is all-sufficient and cannot be repeated (cf. §8) is a challenge to Melanesian thinking, which is closely bound to the cycles of nature. The elements of bread and wine, too, are unfamiliar and cause both material and symbolic difficulties, whereas coconut milk or *kaukau* (sweet potato) are traditionally significant and may be more readily available. Some churches approve of the use of such substances as elements (cf. §§[13], [29]). There may be cultural equivalents to the eucharist as a rite of reconciliation, such as the *kava* ceremony of Fiji.

316. The eucharist as a "memorial" in the form of a common meal which is "a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God" (§3) is more readily understood throughout Melanesia. We thus welcome the document's insistence that the eucharist is "the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ" (§5), i.e. sacrifice and memorial belong together. In Melanesia, the shared meal is the supreme sign of fellowship and reconciliation, even with former enemies. For the Pentecostal churches, forgiveness and healing are an integral part of the celebration of communion. In our different ways, we are thus able to appreciate that "the eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in

search of appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life"

(§20). Whether our people are caught up in tribal fighting or in the struggle

to achieve social justice in the course of economic and political develop

ment, the eucharist as "the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, who

ever lives to make intercession for us" and as "the memorial of all that God

has done for the salvation of the world" (§8) can be of the greatest

significance to them.

317. "The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist" (§13), but our churches interpret this presence in different ways.

The United Church has no doctrine of the eucharist as a sacrifice, and it

considers the event of the celebration as a whole to be the memorial. For

Lutherans, the body and blood of Christ are present "in, with and under"

the elements of bread and wine, but he is more truly represented in the

eucharistic event itself. Anglicans and Catholics come closest to the termin

ology of the document in regarding the eucharist as the sacramental

representation of the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Yet for all of us, eoinmun-

ion with Christ, as communities and in the context of the celebration, is the true meaning of the eucharist.

### **Ministry**

318. Under certain circumstances the United Church can invite lay people to preside at the communion service and some Lutherans consider it possible to allow this, but Catholics and Anglicans do not (cf. §29). The United Church makes least of the distinctions between ordained and lay, men and women in the church's ministries; the Catholic Church makes most of them; and the others come somewhere in between. Yet we can all agree that each Christian community has a right to the eucharist, and that, at least in times of need, it is possible in most of our churches for lay people designated, if not formally "ordained", by the community to preside at the eucharistic celebration (cf. §§14, [14]).

319. We find that we have greater difficulties with each other's forms of ministry than with either baptism or eucharist. While the Salvation Army has neither sacraments nor an ordained ministry, and for traditions such as the Baptists and the Church of Christ the whole atmosphere of such discussions about ordination and ministry is strange, for Catholics, Anglicans and Lutherans the possibility of real unity stands or falls on the issues treated here. We are grateful for the opportunity given by BEM to gain insights into one another's understandings of ministry.

320. The document's stress on ministry as the calling of the whole people of God in the context of the priesthood of all believers (cf. §§4, 12) makes it easier for us to face up to the differences which separate us in the area of ordained ministry, and to include appropriate Melanesian forms of authority and service in our discussions. In the Lutheran Church, "elders", whose role can approximate quite closely to that of traditional leaders,

function as "pastors" and carry out specialized ministries. There is a special rite for bestowing the position of elder. They lead the congregation collectively, and they still have a say in deciding who should proceed to theological training and ordination. In the Catholic Church, specialized ministries which recognize the charisms of lay men and women have developed greatly in recent times, from "catechist" (roughly equivalent to Lutheran "evangelists") to counselling, educational and even judicial roles. Churches in the Pentecostal tradition explicitly strive for "multiple leadership" exercising an authority which is neither autocratic nor democratic (cf. §16). The United Church pastor has authority over the laity but can be checked by the community. There is a danger, however, that traditional Melanesian forms of leadership can become confused with Christian, e.g. in rivalry between lay leaders and ordained pastors.

321. Regarding ordination, we are not at present able to resolve our differences on whether it is primarily the community's recognition or

184 *Churches respond to BEM*

approval of a gift or calling already received (cf. §§6,15,44), or the actual bestowal of a gift or "charism", even to the extent of being a sacrament in which a special grace is received (cf. §§7c,39,42). For some of our churches, ordination is no more than a "commissioning" of people who have already proved themselves in preaching and service. For all of us, however, it is "an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation" (§ 40). On the other hand, we all need to deepen our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit, or charisms (cf. §§ 5,32), and to see the ordained ministry as one of them.

322. Some of our churches have great difficulties with the traditional threefold structure of ordained ministries as those of bishops, priests and deacons. In some churches, the ministry of episkope or "oversight" is also carried out by persons designated as "moderator" or "president", including those who "relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community" (§29; cf. §§21,22). Only Catholics and Anglicans speak of "presbyters" (cf. §30) or ordained ministers as "priests; all others prefer the term "pastor". Most have difficulty in seeing any difference between the work done by catechists and evangelists and the role ascribed to the special office of deacon (cf. §[31]). In our Melanesian situation, which is all too often characterized by Christian sectarianism and tribal disputes, we agree that "a ministry of episkope is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body", and we observe with pride that "this ministry of unity" (§23) is often exercised by evangelists and pastors, whether lay or ordained, at great personal risk.

323. In view of the particular status of women in Melanesian cultures, it may be premature to raise the issue of ordaining women here at present. Some churches which ordain women in overseas countries do not yet contemplate doing so in Melanesia, with the exception of the United Church and the Salvation Army. However, our churches have made it

possible for Melanesian women to discover and make use of their special gifts, and we must carefully consider the effect of denying ordination to women on the further development of Melanesian cultures (cf. §[18]).

324. Our discussion of ministry has confronted us with the perennial question: "What is the church?" Does it depend on a "continuity of the word" alone, or is "continuity in the apostolic tradition" (§35) essential to it as well? Does "the apostolic tradition of the whole church" necessarily include "the succession of the apostolic ministry" (§[34])? If it does not, how can we be sure that we can recognize one another's ministries (cf. §52)? If we regard ordination as a special gift of the Spirit, can it be resigned or revoked (cf. §48)? What is the ultimate source of authority in the church (cf. §15), and how do ministers, whether ordained or lay, men or women, participate in it (cf. §[13])? These are some of the questions which our study of BEM has forced us to reconsider in our Melanesian context.

## Conclusion

22. In conclusion, we <sup>-^</sup>ould like to suggest the following practical st by which our churches c; <sup>^</sup>an continue to respond to BEM.

325. Study the BEM text itself or this Melanesian response to it in seminary courses and parish discussion groups, where possible in ecumenical fellowship with oth<sub>er</sub> churches

326. Draw on experiences <sup>^</sup>gained in coming to grips BEM whgn de with Christian groups <sub>who</sub> are causing difficulties

327. In all relationships <sup>With other churches</sup> try to identify the fakh wg have in common ra\* <sup>ther than concentrating on differences</sup>

328. Worship together Wherever occasion allows, either by offering one another the hospita<sup>lity of the Lord's ^</sup> or by usmg the Ljma H inspired by BEM.

329. Reopen both bilate<sup>ral and</sup> multilateral dialogues among our churches in order to enable \* <sup>s many as possible</sup> to prepare an offida<sup>^</sup> response to this text at the hi<sup>ghest appropriate level o</sup> f authority" (p. x) and thus prepare the groun<sup>d for real consensus (cfp ix) and Qur CQmmon</sup> attainment of the <sup>goal of Visible unity in one fakh and One eucharistic</sup> fellowship, expressed <sup>in worship and common ^ife in ^^^</sup> that the world might believe" (p. viii, from WCC By-laws)

# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN THE PHILIPPINES

First of all we offer our gratitude and praise to the Lord, our God revealed in Jesus Christ, for the opportunity to ponder together and reflect upon the convergence document on "Baptism, Eucharist and the Ministry". The National Council of Churches in the Philippines through the commission on evangelism relations has facilitated a study and discussion of the document among member churches of the NCCP which are as follows: the Christ Centred Church, the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, the Iglesia Independiente en las Islas Filipinas, the UNIDA de Cristo, the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Philippine Independent Church, the Philippine Episcopal Church, the Salvation Army and the Lutheran Church of the Philippines. The NCCP sponsored a number of consultations on the BEM document, attended by official representatives of the member churches of the Council. We are still in the process of discussion on the BEM document. As you will notice we have not covered the whole topic.

The following is a comprehensive report of the discussions that have been held so far.

## **The significance of the BEM document to our churches in the Philippines**

The convergence document is an ecumenical milestone/landmark to churches all over the globe, including our churches here in the Philippines. After years of indifference which gave way to mutual ignorance of each other's doctrines and practices, estrangement and even hostilities at times, the churches were encouraged, inspired to lay aside differences and come to a dialogue, thereby increasing awareness of each other's beliefs which may give way to mutual understanding. The Lima document has sparked discussions, study and reflection not only of the document itself but of the doctrines of the member churches of the NCCP. This also gave occasion to compare, seek out and realize the similarities and the otherness of each.

The dialogue started off with a denominational sharing on baptism statements of each member church. Questions to clarify followed each

presentation. This in itself was valuable because of the opportunity for each member church to examine, to be clarified of some misunderstandings regarding each other's practice on baptism. What was so important in the sharing was the discovery that there is so much in common between the member churches.

## **Our similarities**

330. Baptism is one of the sacraments ordained by Christ. By the word sacrament we mean a dramatic sign of the active and dynamic presence of Christ in the life of the church. The biblical bases for Christ as ordaining baptism are his own baptism by John the Baptist "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15); by his baptism refers to his (Christ's) death (Mark 10:38c), his command to the church to "go into all the world to proclaim the gospel. . . and to baptize" (Matt. 28:20).

331. The baptism of a person into the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5). "Into death" means at least two things: (a) death to sin, (b) arising from the dead.

The baptism of Jesus means that the baptized person who participates in Jesus' death participates in his ministry. Our baptism means that we, the many, are incorporated into him and are become with him and in him. Into resurrection means (a) newness of life meaning therefore that baptism leads to new birth in terms of Christian moral and ethical living; (b) also hope in the promise of a future resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:1).

332. Because of what is stated in baptism §2, repentance, regeneration and justification are all embodied in baptismal rite. . . repentance because it is a "death of sin", conversion or regeneration because it is a visible demonstration of the change from the "old man" in Adam to being a "new man" in Christ, justification because the rite signifies our being "made right with God".

333. There is an inseparable link between baptism and faith. Faith is defined as the humble and eager acceptance of the salvation from God to us given to us by his grace. Faith includes acknowledgment of the truth of the gospel, trust in the Lord, confidence in the faithfulness of God in Christ.



Faith is the total response to the grace offered to us on the cross. Faith must not be understood as our human achievement. It presupposes God's prior initiative to call us, without which our decision of faith is not possible.

334. Baptism into Christ means entrance into membership of the body of Christ, the church. The rite demonstrates that there is no such thing as an

isolated Christian. There is one baptism for all Christians (Eph. 4:4-6) in the church universal. So universal that in Christ there is no "Jew nor Greek, nor male nor female, no bond nor free" (Gal. 3:27-28). No one is a member of the church without having been baptized.

335. Baptism is both by water and by the Holy Spirit. The use of water symbolizes the washing away of sins, therefore meaning the death of the

"old man". However Luther wrote: "Baptism is not simply water but it is the water used according to God's command and connected with God's word."

### **Our heritage of diversity**

Baptism as we practise it today is a doctrinal paradox. Ephesians 4:5 says: "One Lord, one faith and one baptism" but in actual practice Christian baptism is not one but many. By many we mean its practices and the interpretation of its validity. Furthermore, it is a paradox because while it is meant to unite, it is now used to divide. Indeed this paradox is a challenge to our concern for Christian unity.

Diversity is our historical heritage; while we cannot reject it we cannot at the same time honour the call for Christian unity without an effort towards transcending our diversity. This must begin with a frank acknowledgment of it. As perceived from the series of dialogues we had on baptism the following doctrinal concerns reflect our diversities.

1. **Meaning of baptism:** Baptism had been denned as an act of incorporation into the body of Christ which is the church, participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, an act of faith in response to the gospel, hence a Christian witness and as cleansing for the remission of sin.

We registered our difference in the definition of baptism as cleansing. The difference lies in whether the cleansing was symbolic or actual in the rite itself. Those who believe that baptism is an ordinance understand cleansing to be symbolic of the fact of cleansing which takes place when one repents or believes in Jesus Christ. The rite of baptism which follows after that is therefore symbolic of that which already exists in the believer. There are also those among our member churches who take baptism as actual cleansing which takes place during the baptismal rite. Those who take baptism to be a sacrament favour this position. Water in baptism is therefore sacramental in that it is an important ingredient together with the word for the actual cleansing of the baptized. These different views of baptism as cleansing have one common requisite — faith. But even with this common element the order of faith in relation to baptism is different; those who understand baptism to be an ordinance usually have faith as a prerequisite to baptism. Those who understand baptism as sacramental place faith as either before or during or after baptism. This is usually true in infant baptism where faith is absent at the time of baptism, but Christian nurture follows baptism which hopefully ends up in faith.

2. **The recipient of baptism:** The question as to who should receive baptism reveals another area of difference. There are those who would baptize only those who can express responsibility for faith as a response to the gospel. Terms associated with this view are adult or believers' baptism. This view excludes baptism of infants because of the inability of infants to express responsible faith. There are those who baptize infants for reason of

cleansing and incorporation into the Christian church. Those who favour this view usually require catechism as part of the process of incorporation so that while at the time of baptism faith is represented by the authority of those responsible for the child, personal faith is expressed as an end result. Both the views can claim scriptural basis. The latter view however is strengthened by the tradition of the church.

The question of baptismal validity becomes intense for these opposing views in case of transfer of membership, especially when the requirement for rebaptism is applied to those who have one kind of baptism not practised by the receiving church.

There are churches which allow and administer either believers' baptism or infant baptism on request of the one being baptized or by the parents or guardians of the infants. For these churches the question of validity is not related to the mode of baptism. What is acknowledged as essential to baptism is personal faith or represented faith.

3. **The baptismal formula:** There are churches which are using the Trinitarian formula as found in Matthew 28:19: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". Most of the member churches of NCCP are using this formula. There are those who use "in the name of Jesus" only. Both practices have scriptural support. Among the NCCP member churches the issue of baptismal validity is not very intense at this very point. Other sectarian groups would consider this point very vital to the question of baptismal validity.

### **Unity in diversity**

The historical development of the church shows how the one church of Jesus Christ became many. The one and the many are both properties of the contemporary church. It implies unity and diversity. While her diversity is clearly visible it is a tragic omission on the part of the Christian people if they fail to recognize and make actual her unity.

The diversity of the Christian church is basically doctrinal before it is anything else. In our present concern this is revealed in how we understand and practise Christian baptism. We must raise the implications of these differences to our Christian unity in relation to the church in her mission.

We have observed how the priority of the church has changed from one age to another. Change of situations produces different concerns. We emphasized the point that today we ask questions that the New Testament church did not ask. It does not mean that we do not get answers from the NT to the questions we ask such as what is valid baptism, simply because it does not ask it. The requirement of faith not the mode of baptism or anything else about baptism is uniformly maintained in the NT. This faith requirement must constitute the uniting element in the churches today. Maintaining the faith element among our churches today, we must now raise the questions concerning our different views on baptism in relation to

church membership. Baptism is generally agreed to be incorporation into the body of Christ which is the church. This church is the universal church whose membership is made up of all those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour. This universal church is visible in particular situations in the form of the local church. The question therefore arises, does baptism in one local church entitle one to membership in another local church which practises a different form of baptism? If the answer is no, we must further ask how can one who is a member of the universal church of Jesus Christ be excluded from membership of a local church which is a part of the universal church? This practice must be seriously questioned. It is not only illogical but also unfortunate because it justifies and enhances the disunity of the Christian church. However, if the answer is yes, we must further ask, is the one being admitted into membership of one local church from another local church which practices another form of baptism, qualified to take a position of leadership in the new church? Here we are observing between membership and leadership. There are no easy answers to these questions. We are not here to issue a decree which contains a formula of unity which should be followed by all the churches. What we can hope for is that in accepting and understanding the NT, on faith, we will have the courage, wisdom and humility to follow its implications for Christian fellowship and mission.

Our doctrinal differences on baptism are real and must be respected; however they must not have a finality so as to preclude any genuine effort to actualize Christian unity. Doctrine divides and there are obstacles on the road to Christian unity. But our unity is just as real as our disunity. We do not invent it. It is already given in Jesus Christ. It is when we truly live the meaning and implication of our faith in him that we can begin to experience our unity within the fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ.